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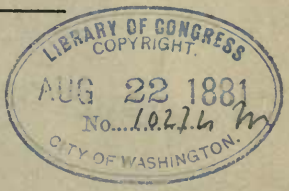
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HAROLD DORSEY'S FORTUNE.

BY

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HAROLD DORSEY'S FORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

COMFORTED.

"IT was a bright day when the new teacher came to us," said Mrs. Rady, as she talked with Miss Austen. "She comes to our rooms of an evening and sits with us like one of our own, 'though she's a lady, the same as yourself."

"I am glad you like her," was replied. "I think we are getting some fine people about us."

"You may well say that, Miss, with yourself and young master to the fore. It's getting like what it was in the old master's time, only with a difference I can't explain. There's

good cloth making, too; not a stroke of poor work done on the place."

Mr. Bumstead made the same remark while calling attention to some recent improvements; reiterating the prophecy that they would soon be "making piles of money."

"Mr. Elliot thinks of the land, but you can well afford to leave the fields fallow."

"It does not seem to me we can afford such waste," answered Miss Austen. "If the prosperity of a country depends upon its agriculture, we must contribute our share. Mr. Elliot thinks we can derive a good income from the land, and his opinion is worthy of consideration."

"That it is. There's not much but he understands, and there's not a better man than he is. It goes against me to see him doing the work he does, 'though he's a gentleman all the same."

"Nothing can make him other than a gentleman, so long as he abstains from intoxicating drink."

"And that will be as long as he lives. He

has changed while you were away, and he says he has help now, he never had before. He can't be doing his work better; but you will know he's happier the minute you see him. There he is, coming with Harold. He was busy last evening with a plan of the land, and likely, by this time, every rod of it is set down to growing something. Mr. Stuart says you will decide about it all."

One who saw Mr. Elliot then for the first time would never have dreamed what he had been only a year before. Harold remembered him as he craved shelter from a storm which closed a day as bright and beautiful as that they were now enjoying. Drenched with rain, travel stained, and famishing, was the wanderer who accepted, with humble gratitude, the hospitality he received.

As for Richmond Elliot, he had little time to indulge in retrospective thoughts. The present demanded his attention. Had Austenville been his to have and hold during his natural life, he could not have calculated its

resources, or computed its possible income more carefully.

At Miss Austen's request he accompanied her home, and laid before her the plan of which Mr. Bumstead had spoken. From this she learned more of her estate than she could have learned in many long, toilsome walks.

"I am satisfied to leave the entire management with you," she said, at length, to her companion. "I suppose you will choose to take Harold as an assistant."

"It will be best for him to work out of doors," was replied. "He would be like a caged bird if he was confined within four walls."

"I am glad you have such a care of him, Mr. Elliot. I am sure he will repay you."

"I have been paid in advance for all I can ever do for him. Mr. Dorsey was my friend when I was in the greatest need. I was in a far more pitiable condition than when I came here. There and here I have received help for soul and body."

"You have come out on the Lord's side, Mr. Elliot?"

"I have, Miss Austen;" and the tone in which this reply was made more than compensated for its brevity.

"I am very thankful. I never feared that you would exert an active influence against religion in this community; but I knew that your example would have great power. My brother lived to see that his skepticism was without reason, and his most cherished beliefs without foundation."

"Thank God that he did, and that I, too, have lived to see the same. I look upon the world with different eyes now that I recognize God's hand in all things. Nature is a bountiful mother, but she is heartless. But pardon me, Miss Austen, I am trespassing upon your time, and forgetting my duty."

"Far from that, Mr. Elliot. We have not yet spoken of Miss Greenleaf. You are satisfied with her as a teacher?"

"Indeed I am. She has accomplished more since she came here than most teachers would

accomplish in a year. I am constantly wondering how, with so few facilities for acquiring knowledge, she has learned so much. She must have improved every moment of time, and made the most of every advantage. She might be an artist; but she is only a plain working-woman, distrustful of her own abilities, and somewhat timid in regard to meeting Miss Austen."

"She will soon forget her timidity."

"I think she will, Miss Austen;" and no gentleman could have bowed himself from the presence of a lady with more easy grace than did Richmond Elliot.

Not many days after this conversation Alice Greenleaf was seated at the old-fashioned desk appropriated to her use, while a troop of children waited without that they might have the pleasure of walking home with her. She had forgotten her surroundings, and was thinking of the past, when Jessie Elliot appeared, and half whispered:

"Miss Austen is coming. She is almost here; and I guess she is coming to see you.

We children better go. She will want you all to herself."

Miss Greenleaf did not move from the position she had occupied until the door was opened and her name pronounced.

"Miss Austen," she responded; and two hands were clasped as these women looked each into the face of the other.

That both found their previous opinions somewhat at fault was not strange; yet, as they conversed, they were not long in discovering that they had many sympathies in common.

"I have heard Jessie Elliot speak of your home, and I know you must have regretted leaving it," said the visitor, when they had talked a little of the school and its interests.

"I did; but now that mother is gone there is not so much to keep me there. Then I have left some one in my cottage who will enjoy it. I should not like to have it occupied by strangers. Everything in it and about it has a history for me. Every vine and tree and shrub seems like a friend."

"Did you plant them all yourself?"

"With two exceptions, I did. There were two scraggy apple-trees growing in the lot when I bought it. They were all, except such bushes as usually grow in a neglected pasture. The house was unfinished, so that I had the pleasure of finishing it to suit my own taste; and some of the work I did with my own hands. I could not afford to hire it done."

"But how could you do it yourself? I never saw a woman do such work."

"It is no harder than much of the work women do. If I wanted a shelf or a stand, I made it, and I learned to use tools quite handily."

"That is an accomplishment it will be hardly necessary for you to use here."

"I presume not, Miss Austen, but I was very anxious to have a pleasant, attractive home; and, in order to have it, I was obliged to make the most of everything I could command."

"Pleasant, attractive homes are the great

need of the world, and they can be secured with less money than most people count necessary."

"Certainly they can, Miss Austen. I wish, sometimes, I could get together a few of the people who think, because they are poor, they can have nothing pretty. I should like to tell them my experience. I have done some things my neighbors thought extravagant; yet those very things repaid me fourfold. If I bought a book, I was usually obliged to save the price from some article of dress, or do some extra piece of work after my regular working-hours. But I am talking too much of myself. I forgot that you are almost a stranger, and that you have lived very differently from the way in which I have lived."

"I had forgotten it myself," replied the visitor frankly. "I have been interested in all you have told me, and I shall consider it a personal favor if you will give our people the benefit of your experience. I have been differently situated from you, but I have de-

pended much upon myself, and can, therefore, sympathize with you."

In their mutual forgetfulness the conversation was continued until a glance at her watch reminded Miss Greenleaf that she would be expected at her boarding place, when they started homeward.

"If birds would but stay their flight that we might study them, how much we should gain," she said, as they caught the flash of an oriole's plumage.

"We must take them on the wing, as we take the golden opportunities of our lives," responded Miss Austen. "It seemed to be my opportunity when I decided to start up the mill here."

"And mine when the school was offered to me."

"I trust it will prove so, Miss Greenleaf; and that you will feel at home with us. There is so much to be done here we need all the help we can obtain. You have seen Harold Dorsey?"

"Several times."

"And I know you must be interested in him."

"More than in any other person I have ever seen. I had a long talk with him one evening when he was going home from his work. I had been in the woods alone, and I asked him the name of a vine I had in my hand. It was new to me, but he said it was very common where he used to live. He has a well-trained eye."

"And a generous, loving heart. I hope you will cultivate his acquaintance. He has not had many to care for him. There is Norah Borine too. She is another who needs the influence of judicious friends. We must all work together here. You will always be a welcome guest at my house, and you can count upon my friendship. Now, I will not detain you longer. Good-evening."

Harold Dorsey was at work where he saw the two as they separated; and a glimpse of his earnest face reminded Miss Greenleaf of the interview to which reference has been made. He had been shy at first, speaking

only in reply to direct questions; but, after a little while, his reserve vanished, and he talked freely of his old life.

"It wasn't like anything you can know," he said seriously. "I don't think anybody else ever lived so. I didn't care as much for flowers and plants and trees as I did for the living things; but sometimes, when I was tired and lonesome, I would lay my head down among them and cry, because I wanted somebody to comfort me."

"And were you comforted?" asked his companion.

"Sometimes; and sometimes I felt all the worse. When I could hear the growing sound it seemed as though I had company."

"What is the growing sound?"

"I can't describe it exactly; but when everything is growing, if you put your ear down to the ground, you can hear a low humming. It is very low, and very soft, but it is plain as can be. I asked grandsir about it, but he didn't explain it to me. I think I shall know sometime."

"We all have much to learn."

"Yes, ma'am; I have a great deal to learn, and this is just the place to learn it. There are Miss Austen, and Mr. Stuart, and Mr. Elliot, and you, and all the people about here. Every one knows more than I do. I have nobody else."

"I am all alone, too, Harold. My mother died a few weeks ago."

"But you had her once, Miss Greenleaf, and I never had any mother at all. I never belonged to anybody but grandsir, and he never said he loved me."

"Did you always live with him?"

"I suppose so; 'though when I go into the great house it seems as if I had seen one like it before, with pictures and carpets. Likely I dreamed about it."

"Did you go to school?"

"Not much. Grandsir taught me himself, and I read everything I could get. That was not much, but I am reading now."

"And you are happy here?"

"Yes, ma'am; everybody is happy here,

and I have a good home. I liked the woods, but I grew tired of wanting to know what I couldn't find out. There was an old man came 'round once in a while gathering roots and herbs, and I used to go with him, so I learned some of their names. I got some, too, for myself, and grandsir sold them."

"Then you could earn your living in the woods."

"Yes, ma'am; but it is not always pleasant. There is hard work, and sometimes rain and snow and cold. But now everything is coming to new life, just as I am since I read the Bible."

"Then this is your spring-time, and soon it will be summer. Then comes autumn and winter."

"And after that, Miss Greenleaf?"

"A glorious resurrection for those who have done their work well here on earth."

These words came back to Harold again and again as he applied himself to the tasks before him. Each day some duty confronted him, and each day he strove to do his best.

The arrival of Mason Stuart was a marked event which, as yet, he hardly appreciated. They had exchanged greetings, and the visitor had given him some slight assistance in his work, but it was not according to his custom to spend his employer's time in talking. For this reason Mason thought him unsocial, complaining that "he wouldn't say anything, only what he couldn't help."

"You must wait until you find Harold at leisure before you make up your mind in regard to him," said Miss Austen, who was sure to hear a report of her nephew's opinions.

"I don't see why that need make any difference about his talking," was replied. "I can work just as fast when I am talking. Rufe and I keep our tongues running all the time when we are working together. I guess, though, it does take considerable wind, and perhaps Harold isn't used to it. Anyway, there must be more to him than there is to most fellows. But, Margie, I have been disappointed since I came here. There is Harold, and then there is Norah. I offered to carry a

pail of water for her this morning, and I spoke as politely as I know how, but she didn't answer me a word. She snatched up the pail and hurried off as if she was angry. I thought at first I never would speak to her again, but I have changed my mind. I shall talk to her, and I shall carry water for her. It isn't natural for a girl to act so, and she must learn better. She is as different as can be from Jessie Elliot, but I mean to be good friends with both of them."

"You have my best wishes for your success."

"Then I am all right. I had a peep into Mr. Elliot's cottage to-day. I was going by and he spoke to me. Ed was with me. How everybody looks up to Ed, auntie. I don't believe I shall ever get quite used to it. He takes right hold of work too. I never expected it of him. I have been glad every minute to-day that we lost that ten thousand dollars. This is a grand place, and to-morrow, if you are willing, I will put on some of my patched clothes, and help Robert about

his work, so he can take a tramp with me in the afternoon."

"I am perfectly willing, but I had planned an excursion for the afternoon, and intended to invite you and Robert to go with me."

Jessie and Norah Borine were included in this invitation, and the latter was especially delighted. Of course she would go, and she made all possible haste with her work. A little before noon she found time to look in upon Jessie, and express her pleasure.

"We shall have the rarest time," she exclaimed joyously.

"Of course we shall," was replied. "There will be six of us, so we can't help having a good time. I wish Harold was going too."

"Six! Are those boys going?"

"Yes. Miss Austen wouldn't go without Mason, and of course Robert would want to go."

"Then I won't go a step. I don't like boys. They are always in the way, wanting girls to give up to them. They needn't come where I am. I can carry all the water I

want, and this afternoon I shall go to the woods alone."

"O Norah, I shouldn't think you would do so. You won't like it half as well as going with us; and I don't think it would be polite to Miss Austen, after she asked you."

"I can't help it. I won't go with boys."

Saying this in a sharp, peremptory tone, Norah sprang through the open door, without pausing to look back. A horse was rushing furiously down the street, and frightened by the unexpected danger, she ran blindly into his very path. Had not some one interposed to save her she must have been seriously, if not fatally, injured. As it was, Edward Stuart saw the situation, and hastened to her rescue. Harold Dorsey arrested the progress of the frightened animal, and before the danger was really comprehended it no longer existed.

Norah was unhurt, but she lay helpless in the arms of her preserver, who carried her home and laid her upon the homely lounge, which was the one article of luxury

this home could boast. Here she opened her eyes, and after looking around for a moment covered her face with her hands and wept convulsively.

Mrs. Borine came soon, and having heard exaggerated reports of the affair, needed to be soothed and comforted before she could do anything for her child.

"And to think it was Mr. Stuart saved my Norah!" she cried. "Whatever could I do without her? Oh, Miss Greenleaf, you don't know;" and she rocked to and fro in the vain attempt to express the emotions of her heart.

"There is One who knows all about it, and who has you in his keeping," was replied. "You are indebted to Mr. Stuart, but not to him alone."

"Who else?" asked Norah wonderingly.

"Your Heavenly Father, who always watches over you."

"I know, Miss Greenleaf. I am sorry I have made so much trouble. I don't see what made me run the wrong way."

At this Mrs. Borine knelt beside the

lounge, and clasping her child in a close embrace, allowed her tears to flow freely. When she raised her head they were alone. Directly, however, Jessie came in, all the more anxious and eager from having so long restrained herself.

"I thought I had better wait," she said. "Mr. Stuart told me. Isn't he good?"

"The very best of anybody; the very best," answered Norah. "He might have been killed, and I not worth a hundredth of him."

"But he isn't hurt a bit, nor you either, and everybody is so glad. Now, I will stay at home with you this afternoon."

"But I am going," was the quick reply. "I have changed my mind, and I want to go. Miss Greenleaf says I can, and I wouldn't miss it for anything."

CHAPTER II.

AN AFTERNOON EXCURSION.

THE afternoon was all which had been anticipated. The excursionists revelled in sights and sounds, not all have eyes to see or ears to hear. Every flower had a beauty of its own; while every whistle or song of bird touched some echoing chord in the hearts of those who listened.

Norah Borine was thinking so earnestly that she would not have spoken even if alone with Jessie Elliot. She enjoyed all which the others enjoyed, and yet there was an undercurrent of thought and feeling having no reference to what was around her. She wandered away by herself, and sat down upon a stone covered with gray lichens. There were flowers within reach of her hand, but she did not pluck them. The sound of voices became

less and less distinct. She looked up to the blue sky as if she would pierce its mysteries. Miss Greenleaf had told her that she was indebted to God for the preservation of her life. She could not go beyond that simple statement. She could not reason concerning it.

"O Norah, I have wondered ever so much where you could be," said Jessie, coming up to her. We children are going over to the back side of the lot. Will you go with us, or are you too tired?"

"I aint tired. I want to go."

"Then come right along. How many things there are to see, and how long it would take to count them all!"

"There are too many to count. Nobody can ever know how many there are."

"Nobody in the world," suggested Jessie.

"There aint anybody else."

"There is God. You didn't think of Him. His home is in Heaven, but He is in the world all the same. He knows exactly how many things there are, and just where they grow. He knows how many blades of grass

there are in all the fields, and how many grains of sand there are on the sea-shore. Father says, now he has begun to think about it, it seems to him the strangest that God should know about the little things."

"I don't believe it. It aint likely God would care for such things," exclaimed Norah in an indignant tone.

"How can you say so," replied Jessie. "The Bible says the very hairs of your head are all numbered, and not a sparrow falls to the ground without his notice."

"Who says so? How do you know?"

"The Bible says so. I read it there. Didn't you ever read it?"

"No, I never did."

"I will show it to you sometime. It is easy to think that God made the ocean, and the rivers, and the mountains, but I don't wonder it seems strange to you about the blades of grass and grains of sand, if you never thought of it before."

"I never did think of it. How could I, when I didn't know anything about it? Is it

the same God Miss Greenleaf said took care of me this morning?"

"There isn't but one God," answered Jessie. "He is so great, and wise, and strong, there couldn't be another."

"He is a great ways off."

"No, Norah; that is another strange thing about Him. He is everywhere at the same time. He is right beside you this minute, and he knows just what you are thinking."

A startled look in the child's face revealed her astonishment as she glanced around, and then, without speaking, walked rapidly forward.

Miss Austen and Miss Greenleaf improved the time, when the younger members of the party were absent, to talk of personal matters. They were to work together for the general good, and in order to do this to the best advantage some consultation was necessary.

"Our people are kind and ordinarily intelligent, yet many of them need to learn that there is something required in life beyond providing for the wants of the body," said

Miss Austen at length. "This must be done. There is no avoiding it, but it should not be allowed to absorb the whole of life. The homeliest work may be glorified, and there may be something of refinement in the humblest home."

"I know that is true," replied Miss Greenleaf. "I think, too, there are a great many people struggling after some refinement, and dissatisfied without it, when they hardly know why they are troubled."

"I have seen such people; and it would take so little to make them happy, it seems almost wicked not to give them that little. I have seen a poor woman made rich by the possession of a geranium growing in a cracked sugar-bowl. She said it was company for her; and so it was, because it responded to a want of her nature. One can exist in a room with four bare walls, but I should pity the person who desired nothing better. The asparagus and peacock's feathers I have so often seen adorning a plain little mirror always appeal to my sympathy. Something

better could be done by the hands that arranged them if those hands had been trained to do the bidding of a cultivated taste."

"I never thought of asparagus and peacock's feathers in that way, Miss Austen, but I remember when I was very ambitious to possess both."

"And you achieved that ambition long ago."

"Oh, yes; and for a time I greatly enjoyed my good fortune. It is easy to attain some well defined purpose, but when the mind is reaching on and on into limitless space, one is liable to be discouraged."

"Yet this reaching on and on is our greatest encouragement. When we have reached our ideal there will be no more for us."

"I shall never attain to mine. When I was a child I was always wondering about things no one explained to me, and I am wondering still about many of them. You must have had a great deal of help, Miss Austen."

"I have, and now I wish to help others. There are Norah Borine, and her mother and grandmother. I long to do something for them. They are quite by themselves, which makes it difficult to reach them; but happily the hearts of the three are centered in one. Norah represents the entire family; so that whoever can influence her can influence all."

"She will repay a large outlay of effort. She is an uncommon child, with uncommon talents. Jessie is quick to learn, and she has fine tastes; but, with a little assistance, Norah will make a path for herself, and out of the beaten track too. She will never be a common working-woman like her mother."

"I hope not; and I hope she will not be a Catholic like her mother. I believe in the largest freedom of conscience and the utmost toleration, but Norah needs a different religion from that of forms and ceremonies. The religion of Christ would transform her. When she first came here she acted as if she felt that every hand was against her, and I

feared it would require a long time to win her confidence."

"I can always win the children; and then, you know, Miss Austen, that but for my bit of a cottage and the lot around it, I am as poor in worldly goods as Mrs. Borine, and she knows it. I am as used to patching and darning as she is."

"But it is done more neatly, and therein is the difference. In this, as in everything else, Nature gives us a perfect example. She never does her work clumsily, or roughly. Often she covers the most unsightly places with so beautiful a screen as to make them lovely. When she patches, she does it artistically. A decaying tree, after a time, is covered with such a luxuriant growth of mosses and vines that we forget to be sorry it has fallen. So, I suppose, people might beautify their homes, until an observer would forget the absence of paint and plaster."

"That reminds me of the first English ivy I ever saw. It was in a very poor house, but it climbed the wall and crept along the

rafters as freely as if it was growing out of doors. The people of the house told me they never trained it at all. They let it grow its own way, only taking care that it had plenty of water and did not freeze. They brought it from England, so it seemed to them like a bit of the old home, and kept their hearts warm."

"Then it performed a ministry of love. Anything which keeps our hearts warm is a positive blessing; and those who earn their daily bread by hard hand-labor especially need this blessing. I wish to give our people a sense of this need, and then help them to satisfy it."

Here the conversation was interrupted, and after some delay in starting, the party turned their faces homeward, carrying with them fragrant spoils and pleasant memories which more than compensated them for their fatigue.

"It is good to be here," remarked Miss Austen, that evening, to Edward Stuart, with whom she had been reviewing the events of the day, and making preparations

for Sabbath duties. "I would not have believed any place, except the old house, could seem so much like home to me. I wonder if you are really sure of your own identity."

"I sometimes half doubt it. I know I have gained immensely. As Mason says, I didn't know there was so much in me. But no other one among us has changed as has Mr. Elliot. We shall lose him before many years. Somebody will want him in a more responsible position, and bid high for him. He and Harold Dorsey will soon outgrow us."

"Let them, and we will bid them God speed if they leave us. I am anxious to hear Mr. Elliot in our meetings."

"You will have the privilege. He is to take charge of the meeting to-morrow evening, and he told me he should attend church through the day. Mr. Gleason is greatly encouraged. He said, yesterday, that our Thursday-evening meetings had done more to set people to thinking about God than all the positively religious talk they had heard in twenty years. 'In some way,' said he,

'everything was traced back to the divine Creator.'"

"That is as it should be; and as soon as the evenings are longer we will resume our Thursday meetings. There are not many, however, who can be moved as Mr. Elliot and Harold."

"The wonder is that two like them could be found in so small a place as this. Few have their capacity, and fewer still have the sensibility possessed by Harold. He is remarkable in every way."

How heartily Mrs. Peavey would have endorsed this sentiment! Such a good, trusty boy as he was; and yet she knew he was far more than this, although he interested himself in the humblest details of their home life; never so tired or so much engrossed in study as to be unmindful of her comfort.

On Saturday evening, when returning from his work, he stopped for some roots this friend had desired, and while looking for them found a rare flower he wished he could give to Miss Greenleaf.

"Carry it to her to-morrow," said Mr. Peavey. "Put it in water, and it will keep fresh."

"I know it will; but I was not sure it would be right to carry it," replied Harold.

"Just as right as it is to carry pinks and caraway to meeting," responded the old man, as he glanced at his wife with a smile.

"That is right," she said, returning the smile. "My grandmother and my mother always carried pinks and caraway, and they were good women. We mean to keep Sunday as near right as we can, Harold, and I'm sure it will be all right for you to carry the flower to Miss Greenleaf."

Alice Greenleaf was in her room, burdened with a sense of loneliness, and longing for a sight of the brown cottage where she had spent so many busy, happy years. Looking back, her life seemed long, as if she had already passed its meridian. Nothing had occurred to induce this despondency, and yet she was seldom so depressed.

"I must forget myself," she said, half

aloud, and presently there came an opportunity for doing this in a way she had not expected.

Her reception of Harold Dorsey was most cordial, and her admiration for the flower he placed in her hand more than repaid him for the effort he had made to conquer his embarrassment, at what seemed to him at the last moment absolute presumption. If Mrs. Wilder had not called to him he would have retreated, even after he had reached the door.

"I was feeling very lonely, and I am very glad you thought to come to me," said his hostess. "There is always something good coming to us, but our want of faith for the future makes us unhappy. We ought never to be discouraged."

"That is what Mr. Peavey says, and he must know," was replied.

"I presume he does. He has lived to be old, and his faith must sometimes have been sorely tried."

"He says there are dark days for everybody; but I am not looking for them now. I

have been thinking all day of what Mr. Elliot is going to read at the meeting this evening. I learned it early this morning."

"What is it, please? Are you willing to repeat it to me?"

"Yes, ma'am; I would like to. The verses are in the sixth chapter of Matthew. They begin at the twenty-fourth verse, and go through the chapter."

In a clear, distinct tone he recited this Bible lesson, so plain in its teachings, so beautiful in its illustrations, and so conclusive in its arguments. If God so watches over the fowls of the air, and clothes the earth with verdure, His care must surely extend to us who have souls of infinite value.

"We must not forget that. It was just what I needed to hear," remarked his companion, when the last word had been uttered.

"But you must have known it long ago."

"I knew it long ago, but I am sometimes in danger of forgetting it."

"I wish I had known it long ago. But I

never read it until last winter, the day I was sixteen years old."

To the surprise expressed at this, Harold Dorsey responded by telling of the promise made to "grandsir," which he had so religiously kept.

"It was very strange," said Miss Greenleaf.

"It is all strange about me. *I* don't know, but *God* does. I am glad he knows. That is what comforts me. I was wondering what the lilies were like this morning. They grew in the fields."

"Yes; and they were of various colors. You must have seen lilies?"

"Yes, ma'am; but they were mostly in the water. I think they are the handsomest. God made them all."

"Every one."

"And the grass too. I never thought much about the grass, but I shall look at it close now."

"It will pay for close looking, and best when it is in blossom."

"Does it blossom?"

"Certainly. If not, how could there be grass seed?"

"I never thought; but, of course, there must be flowers. How much there is to learn! And the Bible at the foundation of it all! It tells about so many things besides the way we ought to live, and love God. I used to think it didn't tell about anything else. Mr. Elliot says it's the grandest book in the world, when you read it with the right spirit. He will talk well to-night. He always does, and I love to hear him."

It was a peculiarity with Harold that when he became interested in conversation he talked with great freedom, seemingly unconscious of any disparity between himself and his companion. So now he was only anxious to re-receive the instruction and sympathy of which his quick intuition assured him. He might even have forgotten that he intended going elsewhere had not another reminded him of this.

Only after much solicitation had Mr. Elliot consented to lead the meeting that Sabbath

evening, and it was only after earnest prayer for guidance, and a careful study of the passage to be read, that he entered the hall. The attendance was large. People were anxious to see and hear the man who sat so long with bowed head, they feared they were to be disappointed.

At length he arose, designated a hymn, and began to sing. Both hymn and tune were familiar, so that all joined in the service of song. Then was offered a prayer, short, simple, and fervent. The scripture lesson was next read, reverently, as one reads a message from some dear friend who has passed within the veil.

Mindful of the younger members of the audience, he talked at some length of the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field; mingling something of natural science with the most sacred religious truth. Last, and greatest, he repeated Christ's assertion: "Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

"Our Saviour's words; and better than all who have since lived, He knew whereof he

affirmed. He knows all things, and needs not that any should tell Him. He sees our hearts. He knows our most secret thoughts. We may deceive others, but He is never deceived. He has seen myriads of human beings grasping the world with one hand while extending the other for blessings God has promised to those who love and obey Him.

"I never attempted this; not because I was too sincere and conscientious, but because I was so wilfully blind and sinful. No other here has wandered so far from the right path as I; no other has so much to be forgiven; but, thanks be to God, the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin.

"I have scoffed at this blessed truth. I have despised the Bible. I have been recreant to the most sacred obligations. But now I feel and know that the dear old Bible is true, and that the religion it teaches is the only hope of the world. I am not worthy to speak of these holy things in your presence, yet I must give my testimony to the truth;

and God grant we may all so live, that at last we shall stand before His throne justified and sanctified through Him who gave His life a ransom for many."

The speaker resumed his seat, and again bowed his head, when, to relieve the intensity of feeling by some general expression, Edward Stuart began a song of praise. For a little time the richest, fullest voice was missed; and then it helped to swell the melody, which, like a glad outpouring of mutual joy, brought nearer and closer all hearts. The meeting was then open, and all were invited to say a word for Christ.

Mason Stuart looked his astonishment when his brother arose and expressed the same confident faith which had characterized Mr. Elliot's remarks. Miss Austen followed. Then others; some just starting in a Christian life; some young and some old; some intelligent and some ignorant. Miss Greenleaf had never taken part in such a meeting, but she did so now, and thus assumed her rightful place. The hour was fully occupied, and

the time for closing the meeting had arrived, when Mason sprang to his feet, and, in his usual frank, earnest manner, said:

"I don't know certain that I am a Christian, but I can't remember when I didn't pray. I love God and the Saviour, and I try to serve them. I love them, and I am not ashamed to say that I am afraid of doing wrong. If there is a boy or girl here who hasn't chosen Christ, let me tell you you are making a great mistake. There is nothing like the Bible and prayer for keeping a fellow straight, and I mean to stick to both."

CHAPTER III.

THE SUNDAY MEETING.

NOTHING could be added, and surely no one would wish to take from the effect of this short, manly speech. The meeting closed, and the people went their way to talk of what they had heard.

"Mason, my dear boy, you have made me very happy," said his aunt, when they were alone together. "I don't think I had expected you to speak as you did."

"Do you mean, Margie, that you don't think I act like a Christian?"

"No; that is not what I mean at all. I think you are a good, conscientious boy, and I have always known you were a praying boy. I have no doubt that you are a Christian; but I had not thought of you as one who would help keep up the interest of our meet-

ings. So I was happily surprised, and I am very glad you talked."

"Well, I am glad I did, too; and I am glad you are glad. I couldn't help it very well. I wanted to tell how I felt, and I thought may be there was some boy or girl there who would like to know. You were no more surprised at my speaking than I was at Ed's. I knew he was good, as folks say, but I didn't know he was an out and out Christian till this evening. I tell you, Margie, I was proud of him, and the people seemed to think what he said was of consequence. It was worth losing that money just to have him what he is. I am not like him, and we shall do different work in the world, but we can both of us do right. You know old Deacon Goddard, Margie, and what a dear, good old man he is, and how everybody loves him?"

"Yes, I know all that, Mason."

"Well, last winter, something you wrote to me set me to thinking whether I was a Christian, and, finally, I made up my mind

that if I was, I ought to be like Deacon Goddard. So I went over to his house and told him about it. Now what do you think he did?"

"I don't know, only I am sure he must have given you some very good advice."

"He did, but that came afterwards. He just opened his mouth and laughed as hard as he could laugh, till it seemed as though he never was going to stop. At first I felt like crying. I thought he was making fun of me. But after a minute I began to laugh too. It was a funny time for a fellow who went to talk with a deacon about religion. But pretty soon he reached out his arms and drew me up close to him, and talked to me as good and loving as you could. He said I was a boy and he was an old man, and I couldn't be like him if I tried ever so hard. He said I ought not to be either. He said I must be a boy Christian, and serve God in a boy's way; and if I asked God to help me I could do my own work just right. Is that what you think, Margie?"

"Certainly it is. I don't wonder Deacon Goddard laughed. The idea of your being like him! Did you go home satisfied?"

"Yes, Margie, I did, and I have gone along since then without worrying. He helped me a good deal, 'though I never said anything in meeting before. I guess our minister wouldn't like to have me talk in his meetings. I have talked to Rufus Brown a good deal, and I think he is all right, but nobody knows it except his mother and me. I liked your meeting. I don't see why people don't have such everywhere, instead of the dull, prosy ones, where the men and women act as though they all wanted to go to sleep. I wish Norah had been there. Don't you suppose she will go sometime?"

"I hope she will."

"I mean she shall. I have found out that when I don't see how I am going to bring things 'round to suit me, and I am sure it would do good to have them brought 'round, the best thing I can do is to pray."

"And are your prayers always answered?"

"Not always exactly as I calculated. But I know God's way is best, so that makes it all the same to me. You know I love Rufe Brown, and I have tried to help him. I kept wishing he could have more money, and at last I prayed for it. I didn't make any conditions either. I never do. I think that is one reason why people don't get answers to their prayers. I talked with Deacon Goddard about that, and he said, if we wanted anything enough to really pray for it, we should be willing to do our part towards bringing it about, and not try to make any conditions with God. So I prayed that Rufe might have some money, and my prayer was answered. I never thought the money was to come in the way it did; as the price of my life. Now I am going to pray for Norah Borine in real earnest."

Edward Stuart came in, and glancing at the flushed face of his young brother, judged rightly that there had been sufficient excitement for one day.

"You are tired," he said gently.

"It won't hurt a fellow to be tired, if he is only happy enough to make up for it. I am ever so glad you are a Christian. It will be the making of you;" and big tears rolled down the boy's cheeks.

Margaret Austen went out softly; her own eyes dimmed, and her heart so stirred that she needed to carry her joy where she had so often carried her grief.

Meanwhile, Norah Borine was passing through a strange experience. The incident which had well-nigh proved a tragedy had deeply impressed her. The Sabbaths were wearisome days to her, notwithstanding the company of her mother and grandmother. She remained within doors, dissatisfied and restless; counting the hours between the departure of the people for church and their return. She had never considered it a privation that she could not go with them, but it was a great self-denial to lose one day in seven from her favorite pursuits.

"Why can't I go to the woods?" she asked.

"I'm thinking the mistress wouldn't like

your strolling, and you can well bide at home for a day," answered her mother.

"Shure, child, I'd not be liftin' a finger to grieve the mistress, or the young master either. Bide within, and not be fretting."

So Mrs. Rady settled the question, but Norah was not content.

"Mother, are you willing I should walk down by the mill?" she continued. "Jessie goes there with her father of a Sunday."

"Yes, go, child; I've not the heart to keep you," was responded.

Norah did not say she wished she might attend the meeting. She went down by the mill, as she had proposed, and when there, stood looking into the water until it occurred to her that this was a favorable opportunity for seeing the hall she had never yet entered. She could reach it without being observed; and directly she was mounting the stairs leading to it. It was not so grand as she had expected, yet some attraction held her there.

She was startled by the sound of voices. She must make her escape, and there was but

one way to do this. A small room, opening from the landing, and separated from the hall only by a thin partition, offered a place of retreat, which she entered just in time to avoid Mr. Bumstead and Robert.

She would have hastened down and away as soon as they had passed; but another and another came, until she almost held her breath, lest she might be discovered. Groping in the darkness, she found a block of wood, and sat down to await the event. The hall door was closed, and she judged that the meeting was about to commence. From her position she could readily hear what might be said, and the temptation to remain was too strong to be resisted.

She lost not a word of the Scripture lesson; not a word of the remarks which followed. The singing charmed her. She had learned some old Irish songs, crooned by her grandmother now and then; but these were so different, she was ready to believe she had never before heard anything which could properly be considered singing.

Still she lingered, listening as for her life. Some of the speakers she failed to recognize, but most of the voices were familiar. When the last hymn was announced she rose to her feet, and was ready to bound away, as Mason commenced speaking. Waiting to hear him through, she was in danger of forgetting the need of haste. Suddenly, however, she remembered, and by a retired path reached home.

"You were long gone," said her mother.

"I've heard the meeting," she answered almost defiantly.

"Was it for that ye got lave to walk?" asked her grandmother, with an ominous frown.

"No, granny, I didn't think I'd go. It just happened, and I'm glad it did. You'd like it yourself. The singing was like what they say Heaven is."

"Norah, dear, tell us how it happened," said Mrs. Borine, laying her hand caressingly upon the head of her child.

Thus adjured, Norah gave a correct version of the matter, adding:

"It was all about God, and how we ought to love Him, and do what He tells us. Mr. Elliot said the Bible was the grandest book in the world. He said it was a long letter God has written to us, and we ought to read it every day, so as to know what to do. He read something about fowls of the air, and lilies of the field, and grass; and then he talked about them just as though they belonged with loving God.

"Oh mother, I wish you had been there. There wasn't anybody like a priest. They prayed just as Miss Greenleaf does every morning, and a good many talked. Oh dear! They aint a bit like us;" and Norah buried her face in her mother's lap.

Mrs. Rady said nothing. She could command no words which seemed fitting the occasion. She had never feared that her grandchild would be lured from the true church, although they were debarred from the privilege of its communion. She had been

prepared to encounter persecution in defence of her faith, and was somewhat disappointed at the consideration shown her. The few verses read at the opening of school seemed of too little importance to receive attention, and for that reason she had not objected to them, or to the prayer which succeeded them. She could be severe, but this was not a fitting time. If Norah had spoken truthfully, there was small reason for blame. The child would soon forget.

Mrs. Rady was a sensible woman; a strong, true-hearted woman who had made her way bravely, where many another would have faltered and fallen; but she had now to do with a nature past her comprehension. She had often wished that Norah was like other children, more quiet, and more easily satisfied; but of the hidden sources whence sprang the wild longings and restless energy she knew nothing. It was well that the child had found new friends, wiser than those in her home.

The passage of Scripture read by Mr.

Elliot, with the comments upon it, had interested all who heard it. People talked of the meeting as "best of all." Mr. Peavey closed his Bible and pushed back his spectacles when told that Harold was coming.

"Now we'll hear it second hand, and about as good as first," he said with a smile. "Seems to me sometimes we get more than the rest do, and it's a good thing for the boy too."

Towering above the old man, yet still a boy in the freshness of his feelings and want of practical experience, Harold Dorsey came in.

"I've been studying over Christ's sermon on the mount while you've been gone, and it's been as though Christ was speaking it straight to us poor old folks this blessed Sunday night," remarked his host. "It's like something out of a letter, with our names on the back of it."

"Yes, sir; that is very near what Mr. Elliot said," was the reply.

"And did you learn anything new?"

"Yes, sir; it seemed almost all new. It is wonderful how talk about God never grows old. It is like the sunrise. It is just to light the world every day, and it is the same light; but it never seems twice alike. I have thought about that a great many times, and once I asked grandsir what made it so."

"What did he tell you?"

"He said the difference was in the clouds and the atmosphere, but he didn't explain it. I think I'll find that out sometime."

"Will you find out, too, what makes the old Bible story always new?"

"I know that now. It is the way we hear it. Mr. Elliot told me he used to hate to hear God's name, and now he loves it. The difference is in his feelings."

"That's it, my boy, and you'll find new things in the Bible just as long as you live. It's crowded full of just what we need to learn and remember. Don't you suppose that when I read what Christ said about worrying, I thought how he sent you to us when we needed you so much? 'Twas just as plain to

me as anything could be. I thought about the sea-fowl too, that have their nests in the clefts of the rocks, and the lilies, and the grass. It's all like a great, handsome picture, if you can only think how it looks."

The old man's heart could conceive what his tongue could not utter, as he said this in his homely way, while Harold listened respectfully.

"I suppose in a good many lonesome places, where never anybody goes, there may be a grass-seed dropped, somehow, that'll sprout, and spring up, and grow. Then there'll be more seeds, and then the whole will spring up again, till there's a good-sized patch of grass, that'll keep spreading and growing larger every year. It's 'most strange it should be so, and we can't tell where the beginning is, but God knows all about it."

"Yes, sir; and then to think how little we can learn of all His works. I want to live a great while, so to keep on learning."

"You will, my boy, you will. You will live through all eternity; and eye hath not seen nor ear heard the glory which shall be revealed hereafter."

CHAPTER IV.

WISHING.

HAVING been sent to invite Miss Greenleaf to tea, Mason Stuart was shown to her room, where he was quick to notice the simple decorations which gave to the otherwise plain apartment a cheerful, home-like air.

"Can you paint pictures?" he asked respectfully.

"No," she replied. "I can only take the bits after they are painted and put them together, as you see."

"But these shells, and lichens, and Jews-ears are just as they grew."

"They are painted for all that."

"Oh! I know now what you mean. I never thought of it in that way. There was no brush used."

"Not what we would call a brush, but there was method in their coloring. It did not happen."

"Nothing happens; but do you know how these lichens get their color?"

"There is a bit which took its color from the stone on which it grew. But oftener, perhaps, stones are colored by lichens. Jews-ears, as you call them, have different colors, according to the trees or stumps on which they grow. I have not studied them enough to know much about it, and perhaps there is not much we *can* know. The grass is green, because God made it so, and His secrets are past our finding out."

"I know that, but there is a great deal to be learned, if we only go to work in the right way. I am always asking questions, but you needn't mind telling me to stop when you get tired of them. Aunt Margaret never seems to get tired, but she is used to me. Now, I should like to walk to school with you if you are willing."

Being assured that his company would be

enjoyed, they started out together, much to the annoyance of the children who waited for their teacher; yet, when Jessie appeared, she talked with one and another until the conversation became general, and the walk seemed all too short. When they reached their destination Mason said good-morning, and strolled leisurely home.

The lilies of the field were considered and discussed that day by people who wondered that they could feel such interest in flowers. The children appealed to Miss Greenleaf, while she, in turn, appealed to Miss Austen, who replied:

"I was sure Mr. Elliot had introduced a new subject for inquiry, and to me there was always a peculiar charm investing the lilies of Palestine. They must have been very beautiful, or Christ would not have chosen them as the type of floral beauty. Their gorgeous colors made them a striking feature in an oriental landscape. The shape of the lily, also, was so perfect, that it afforded a pattern for some of the ornamental work of Solomon's

temple. The brim of the molten sea 'was wrought like the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies.' 'And the chapiters that were upon the top of the pillars were of lily work.' These descriptions are quoted from the Bible," added the speaker, turning to her nephew.

"That would make the illustration more striking to the Jews," responded Miss Greenleaf. "It must have seemed strange doctrine when told that the flowers springing up where only God had planted them surpassed in splendor the robes of an eastern monarch whose riches were the wonder of all the world."

"Yet Christ spoke with authority, and it may be that He emphasized his words by pointing to the lilies. I always wondered that one who knew so much of God's works, and who must have had a love for Nature, should turn aside to idols as did Solomon. His wisdom should have made him more devout. But he was the pride of the Jewish nation, surrounded with splendor. His robes

were of purple and scarlet, embroidered with gold, yet the flowers whose dried stalks were used for fuel were far more beautiful."

"I shouldn't think they would amount to much for burning," said Mason, who was mentally taking notes of this conversation.

"The people of the East were obliged to resort to almost every kind of combustible material. Even thorns were used as fuel. A plant is no less beautiful because it is made useful. The lotus of Egypt, which is a high family connection of our water-lily, was almost a national emblem. Its peduncles, or stalks, served as models for columns, which were often surmounted with ornaments in the form of its flowers, resembling enormous tulips. Yet the seeds of this plant, called Egyptian beans, are an important article of food for poor people. The roots, too, are nutritious at certain seasons of the year. The *Victoria Regia*, with its flowers thirty inches in circumference, is a lily. It is, at first, pure white, changing to red. At the end of the third day it withers, and sinks to

ripen its seeds, which are known as water-maize, and highly prized for food."

Robert Bumstead would be sure to hear of these wonderful lilies, and he was also sure to be interested. Upon first meeting Mason he had been inclined to address him with the same respect shown to Mr. Stuart, but a few days of familiar intercourse had quite changed all this. They now met upon common ground; freely exchanging opinions and comparing notes. They confided to each other their hopes and ambitions; and with the earnestness which characterized them, talked of their plans for the future.

"Do you want to study Latin?" asked Mason, when some allusion had been made to the language.

"Yes I do, and I intend to. I wish I could begin to-day. Harold and I have talked about it a good many times.

"Does Harold care about it!"

"He cares about everything. You don't know what he is by seeing him two or three times."

"I don't suppose I do. I haven't studied Latin very long, but I am a fellow who does everything thoroughly; and I know, as far as I have learned, as well as anybody. If you and Harold will get some Latin grammars, I will tell you how to begin, and hear your lessons till I go away. Then I will get Ed to hear you. He can do it just as well as not, and I know he will be glad to help you along."

"It seems too much for him to do for me, but Harold is so grand, I think anybody might be glad to help him. He is a great ways beyond me. He works and studies too."

Doing extra work, too, was Harold. Mr. Peavey's small farm had been long neglected, because of the owner's failing health, but Harold encouraged him to make his plans on a larger scale than usual, and then proposed to give such assistance as would render these plans feasible. An hour in the morning, with an hour or more in the evening, were often added to his regular working day, while to

all remonstrance he replied that he was perfectly able to do it.

"It makes me feel bad to think you don't have any more time to yourself," said Mrs. Peavey one evening. "It's pretty much all one way between us too. We can't ever pay you; but God can, and I know He will. It's my belief He'll give you the desire of your heart, whatever that is. Perhaps it will be after we old folks are gone, but it will come some time. Father has been saying he haint felt so well able to work for ten years as he does now; and the first thing I know I am singing away as merry as a cricket."

"I am glad. When folks sing without meaning to I always think they are happy," replied Harold.

"And you think right. That kind of singing comes straight from the heart. It's like the birds' singing. They've been twittering 'round the house all day. I guess there are some nests being built. I put out some tow this morning and it has 'most all gone. I always put some out every spring. I like to

help the poor little things. It seems too bad for them to have to hunt 'round for a few hairs or a lock of wool."

"They fly so swift, they can go a great ways in a short time."

"I know it, but father says it's my way to want to help everything along."

"Aint that so, Harold?" asked the old man, with a smile which quite irradiated his thin, wrinkled face.

"Yes, sir, it is," was replied. "She helps me all the time."

"It aint much I can do for you, my boy, but you can count on that little just as long as we both live. Now I guess we're all ready for our supper, and I've took extra pains to have something we should like. When folks work hard they want something good to eat; and some way it tastes better when there's more to sit down together."

"Yes, ma'am; I have thought of that a good many times since I came here. I always had enough to eat, and it was good enough; but it was lonesome at the table

with only grandsir and me. When I used to see flocks of birds and herds of cattle I thought that was the way people ought to live; a good many together. I used to wonder how it would seem to hear a good many different men talk every day."

"What of the women, Harold?"

"I didn't know so much about them, 'though I wished I had a mother, same as the boys had I went to school with once. I was always wishing about something."

"I expect that's pretty much the way with us all. That's what keeps us doing. Now, I'm thinking and wishing about my crops. The season's late, but if we have rain and sunshine in their season, farmers will get well paid for their work. The best piece of corn I ever raised was just a hundred days growing. Things are generally made up to folks some way; so it is best to keep right along doing the best we can, and not worry. I've been thinking to-day that we're getting along so well, I can afford to hire some help for a

day or two, and you take your time for study."

"I would rather do the work myself. I can work, and study afterwards. When I have had my supper I shall be rested."

The supper was enjoyed and praised, quite to the satisfaction of her who had prepared it; while the three talked of what interested them all.

"Mr. Elliot and Mr. Gray are driving business," said Mr. Peavey.

"Yes, sir; they keep steady at work, and that is what tells in the long run," was replied.

"Exactly. These flighty folks that work like a house-a-fire one day, and laze 'round the next, don't amount to much. I guess you hurry all the time."

"No, sir, I don't. But grandsir told me I must learn to work fast, and so I did. He said there was a difference between working fast and hurrying. Mr. Gray works fast."

"I know he does. There aint a farmer 'round here but would be glad to hire him,

if he'd only keep sober. Folks say he's coming 'round to be a first-rate man."

"Mr. Elliot says so, and he's going to have a new house to live in."

"More building going on, then; and Mr. Elliot's going to have an addition to his own house."

"Yes, sir; and he's going to do the work himself, at odd jobs. He has made all his plans."

"That's a good way; and he's a man to bring his plans 'round, same as you'll be."

Two hours more of hard work, and Harold again entered the house, where he found his friends impatient at his long absence.

"There is one piece of planting done," he said cheerfully. "We shall have potatoes in good season; and there will be a market for them among the workmen at the mill."

"You don't say you've finished up that piece!" exclaimed Mr. Peavey in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, sir, it is done."

"And you are tired?"

"Not very. I have been more tired a good many times, when my heart was tired too. I shall be well rested by morning."

"You are a real blessing, my boy. God never did anything else so good for us as sending you here. I thank Him for it every day of my life, and I know father does. To think, too, you'd been getting ready to come all the years we didn't know there was such a boy in the world. Read a psalm of thanksgiving to-night, father. There won't anything else seem quite so good as that."

The old man did not hesitate as he turned the leaves of his Bible. He knew on which yellow page to look for the psalm whose every word is expressive of reverent, grateful gladness. He had read it often before; sometimes when the burden of sorrow pressed heavily, and sometimes when borne aloft as on angel's wings.

There was not, that night, a happier home in Austenville; not one where human hearts drew nearer to the great throbbing heart of the Infinite.

Harold Dorsey forgot his fatigue. He went to his little chamber ready for the hour of study with which he closed each day. Another hour in the morning was devoted to his books, and then he hastened to his work, full of bounding life and energy. He waited a little for Mr. Elliot, who came with Mr. Gray. Courteous greetings, never omitted, were exchanged; remarks made concerning the weather, and business begun.

Long before noon a boy dressed no better than Harold himself was seen crossing the newly ploughed land.

"There's Mason Stuart, spite of his clothes," said Mr. Gray. "He's about the queerest fellow I ever run against. I didn't know what to make of him at first; but I've come to the conclusion that he says what he means, and means what he says, every time. He's as different from his brother as brown bread is from white bread; but when it comes to hard work brown bread stands by a man the longest."

"I am not sure that your comparison will hold good," replied Mr. Elliot. "Mr. Stuart

has as much pluck and perseverance as any man needs."

"That may be. I think as well of him as anybody does; but there's something in that boy yonder you don't find very often. I should think my wife patched his jacket; and if our old shoemaker didn't make his boots there's a couple of cobblers pretty much alike."

"You must have good eyesight to see all that so far away."

"I have. I could always see further than almost anybody else, except when I was looking into a glass of liquor. Thank God and Miss Austen I don't look there now."

"Good-morning, Mr. Elliot. Shall I be in your way if I stay 'round here a while?" asked the boy whose appearance had been thus criticized.

"I don't believe you will," was replied pleasantly. "You don't look to me like a fellow who would get in anybody's way."

"I don't intend to. I wanted to come over

here and see what turned up. Good-morning, Mr. Gray."

"Good-morning," responded the man, as he swung his whip over the oxen he was driving.

Harold was collecting the stones which were brought to the surface, and did not look up from his work until Mason addressed him. Again the cheerful good-morning was uttered, and reply made.

"You find pretty dirty stones," was the next remark.

"Yes, sir; they have been in the dirt so long that it sticks to them."

"Now look here," exclaimed Mason, and then waited until his injunction was obeyed. "What do you say *sir* to me for? It makes me feel dreadfully mean and small; and if you haven't anything particular against me I wish you wouldn't do it. I don't like it. Should you, if you were in my place?"

"I don't know;" and, for the first time, when these two were together, the elder laughed in genuine boyish fashion.

"There, now, that does me good. I guess you won't *sir* me any more. Anyway, I will trust you until I find I am mistaken. So let us shake hands and be friends."

"All right," responded Harold; at the same time doing his best to remove the soil which clung to his right hand.

"Never mind that," said his companion. "It is clean dirt, and I never was afraid of that. I have had my hands soiled a great many times. They are pretty white now, but they will get over that before summer is through. You have a handsome hand," added the speaker, as he released it from his grasp. "You have been told that before, haven't you?"

"No. I never was told much about myself anyway."

"Well, you are a first-rate looking fellow. It won't do you any hurt to have me say it. I guess you need a little praising. See; I brought a hammer along to crack stones with. It is a small one, but I have a knack of using it to good advantage, and some of these

dirty stones open like a casket of gems. That isn't original. I can't say things as well as that, 'though I can almost think them. I shall grow to them sometime. Now you can go on with your work, if you want to. I can entertain myself."

CHAPTER V.

A BEAUTIFUL WORLD.

"WELL, I am glad that was a dream," exclaimed Mason Stuart, after rubbing his eyes and looking around the room, to convince himself that he was really awake.

"What was a dream?" asked Miss Austen, who at that moment stepped within the door.

"My experience," he replied, laughing. "I have been living underground, and it is a miserable way of living, I can assure you. I wouldn't try it again for a good deal of money. Have you been away?"

"I have been down to the mill. You have slept a long time, and I thought you would not miss me."

"I didn't; only I wanted to know you were here, as long as my head felt so badly."

"Is it better?"

"Yes, ma'am, it is all right now, and I may as well shake myself, to make sure if I am a boy instead of a gopher. What time is it, please?"

"Tea will be ready in half an hour."

"I should think I had slept. If I had my living to earn, I couldn't spend time that way. I thought I would go down and see Edward this afternoon, but it is too late for that now."

"Yes, it is. He has been up once to see you, and when I was in the counting-room he inquired for you."

"That was kind in him. I shouldn't have expected it, and I don't believe he would have thought of doing it a year ago, 'though he was pretty good then. I am proud of him. I must be able to give a good account of myself when he comes to tea, and this evening I hope he can tell me about the creatures that live underground. Wondering about them made me dream what I did; and the sooner that matter is settled the better. I wonder if he understands the ways of the inhabitants of solid ground."

"If you should ask him, he would probably tell you that if the ground is solid it cannot be inhabited."

"I know that, Margie. I mean to speak of things just as they are, but I don't always do it. I wish everybody would be more particular to speak the truth. It would make it a great deal easier to get along in the world."

This want of truthfulness and accuracy is almost universal. People who profess to know whereof they affirm are really ignorant of much they claim to understand. Thus errors become popular, to the great disadvantage of individuals and communities.

It would be well if such pretenders should meet with others like Mason Stuart; quick to detect inconsistencies, and anxious to prove for himself the truth of what he heard. It must be confessed, however, that this habit had often troubled his brothers, when, in the midst of some narration or discussion, they ventured an assertion not sustained by unquestionable evidence. Dick Fielding, per-

haps, had been most often called to account for his opinions; and now really missed the boy whose criticisms had proved a strong incentive to study.

"I miss Mason more than I should have thought possible," he wrote to his Cousin Edward. "I am indebted to him for many a question, introducing me to new subjects of interest. He is always on the alert; and if you don't sometimes find yourself at your wits' ends to know how to answer him, you will be more fortunate than I have been.

"Thank you for your words of encouragement; and Aunt Margaret for the substantial aid she proposes to give me. I think it is now decided that I shall take a college course; and if I am equal to the occasion, my friends shall hear a good report of me."

"Good for Dick," said Mason, with characteristic earnestness, when this letter was read aloud at the tea-table. "I am glad he is going to college, and I am glad Aunt Margaret is going to send him. He will come out all right. He is equal to the occasion, and one

of us boys ought to have a college education.

"You may conclude to go to college yourself," remarked Edward.

"I don't believe I shall. I don't think I should like it very well; and, besides, I can't afford the time. Think of taking four years out of my life, when I might be driving 'round and learning a thousand things I want to know. I can't afford it."

"It may be the best investment you can make. Four years devoted to study are by no means thrown away. You would acquire habits of mental application which would benefit you all your life."

"I don't doubt it; but I can acquire the habits outside of college, and you don't know how many plans I have on hand."

"Do you know, yourself?"

"Not exactly. I never counted them, and I don't believe I could. But there is one always ready and waiting, when I have time for it. They pop up fast enough to keep me busy."

"I don't remember when you didn't have enough for that. You kept yourself busy when you were a little fellow; and you kept others busy, too, looking after you."

"I don't doubt it; but for the rest of my life I mean to do as much as to take care of myself. I will help others too. I told Robert I would help him and Harold begin to study Latin, as soon as they get some books. I know it as far as I have been, and if there is anything we can't find out for ourselves we can call on you."

"Yes, you can, and I shall be glad to help you. But, at present, you must not do much studying."

"I suppose you are right. My head begins to feel tired again, 'though it don't seem as if I had done much talking or thinking either. It is pretty hard for a fellow like me to be brought up standing in this way, just when he gets fairly started about anything. I thought I should be as well as ever, when I had been here two or three days."

"That is expecting too much, Mason. You

have plenty of time before you, so you need feel in no haste. I will leave Aunt Margaret to prescribe for you now, and help you to make the acquaintance of burrowing animals, when you are better able to do your part."

There was an expression of sadness on the face into which Miss Austen looked, as Edward Stuart left the room; while a heavy sigh betrayed far more of disappointment than Mason would have acknowledged in words.

"I am not good for much," he said at length, wearily. "I thought I had more strength. I wonder if I am beginning to feel discouraged. I don't know exactly how that is; for I never felt so in my life, unless I do now. Anyway it is all right," he added in a cheerful tone. "I am sure of that, and I guess I shall feel better in the morning."

The first sound heard by him the next morning, was the beating of the rain against the window; and as he was inclined to sleep longer, this sound was by no means unwelcome. When he was ready to go below

stairs, he found his breakfast waiting for him in the kitchen, and it all seemed so cosey and home-like, he thought Mrs. Bumstead even better than Aunt Comfort, who sometimes found fault with him.

The day began pleasantly despite the rain, and he was quite sure it would end pleasantly. Mr. Elliot had invited "the boys" to spend this evening at his house. Harold was to be there, and possibly Norah Borine, so the time was sure to be well occupied. Jessie made the cottage as attractive as she could, and was as cordial a hostess as any one need desire.

Naturally and easily Mr. Elliot introduced the subject he proposed to consider, and spoke at some length of the wonderful provisions of nature, which leaves no part of the globe uninhabited. The waters teem with life; the very soil itself, while nourishing and sustaining a countless variety of vegetation, affords a home for myriads of creatures fitted to dwell where the sunlight never comes. Reference was made to the tenants

of the meadow, whose haunts had been invaded, and this gave Mason an opportunity to ask still further in regard to the habits of moles.

His questions having been answered, he was surprised to learn that there is a mole-cricket, as well provided with implements necessary for digging, as is the animal whose name distinguishes it from others of its family.

"A great many insects dig in the ground," said Mr. Elliot, in reply to his expression of astonishment. "Some you know dig pits, where they conceal themselves, and wait for other insects to fall into their clutches. There are traps for the unwary in every direction."

"Do you mean that every creature has an enemy?"

"Yes; but God has given to every creature, from the lowest to the highest, the instinct of self-preservation, which keeps it always on the alert."

"And every one knows its right place."

"Yes, and seldom wanders away from it. But human beings can accommodate themselves to circumstances. They can make fires to protect themselves from the cold, or find a way to shade themselves from excessive heat. If they have much to live on they can enjoy it: if they have little, they can make themselves comfortable with that."

"That is what Aunt Comfort calls having faculty; but she says there are a great many people who *can't* do it, and them she calls shiftless."

"She is right about that. It is fortunate for the shiftless ones that the rule which holds good among most of the lower animals finds its exception with men."

"Please, what is the rule?"

"Work or die."

"That would be hard for some folks, 'though I think it would be just. People say the lame and the lazy are always provided for; and the lame ought to be if they can't work. As for the others, it might do them good to go hungry a while."

"What do you think about it, Harold?" asked Mr. Elliot.

"I am not the one to decide; but grandsir used to say if he had his way lazy people would starve, unless they went to work and provided for themselves. He said I must learn to take care of myself, and make the most of my opportunities. So I tried; and when I have been in the woods and fields I have thought that every fly, and bee, and little creature was trying too."

"They are trying; doing the best they can, as God has given them ability, and they teach us a lesson we should do well to heed. But Mason wishes to hear more about burrowing animals. The evening will be gone before his wishes are gratified unless we keep to the subject."

"I never thought of so many animals living in the ground, and the strangest part of it is, there is something curious about them all," remarked Mason, an hour later. "I don't suppose I shall remember all I have heard, but if I forget I can ask over again."

"That is right," responded Mr. Elliot. "Some of us will remember. Harold will be sure to. I think he never forgets anything."

"I try not to," was the modest reply of him who was thus praised. "I have learned a great deal this evening."

"Shall you study after you go home?"

"No, sir; I shall study in the morning. Daylight is better than candle-light, and cheaper too."

"I am afraid you wanted to stay at home this evening, but we wanted you to come here," said Jessie.

"I wanted to come here, and I am glad I came," he answered quickly.

"I think we are all glad," added Mason, rising to go, while Robert remained seated, examining a piece of lichen.

"What is it?" asked Mr. Elliot, seeing an unspoken request in his little daughter's face.

"We might have a meeting," she replied.

Mason resumed his seat. Mr. Elliot took up the Bible which had belonged to his wife,

and read a chapter, after which he began to sing a familiar hymn. The door opened softly, and a voice which all recognized joined in the song of praise. The door opened wide from within, and Edward Stuart entered without interrupting the worship. Reverently they knelt, while each heart responded to the words of prayer then offered.

It was not late when Harold Dorsey stepped within the shadow of the wood, and yet he walked rapidly, as if in haste to reach his destination. He knew that two old people would be watching for his return, and this thought quickened his steps.

"Harold!" called Mrs. Peavey, just as he was expecting to hear her voice.

"Yes, ma'am, I am here," was the cheerful response. "We all had a good evening."

"I'm glad of it. Now go to bed and get rested. You're a great comfort to us. Good-night."

"Good-night."

Sleep was sweet to him, as was the love-call of the bird which roused him from his

slumbers in the gray dawning of another day. It was yet too early for the most industrious workers to be astir; but lessons must be learned. Gradually the little attic room brightened, while its occupant was too much engrossed in study to heed the rays of sunlight which fell athwart his book.

Something was gained that morning. Where he had thought help indispensable, he had found his own powers sufficient. Breakfast was prepared for him, and he went forth to his daily toil, strong and happy. His heart was so full of gratitude that he wished he could express his gladness as did the birds who filled all the air with their melody.

"O, Mr. Elliot, what a beautiful world this is!" he exclaimed, as he met his friend. "It is good to be allowed to live in it."

"It is a beautiful world, and it is good to live in it, if we live to please God," was replied. "Are you perfectly satisfied this morning, Harold?"

"No, sir; I don't think I am. If I was, I shouldn't want anything more, and that is

not the way I feel. I want a great deal, and it is all before me somewhere. I can find it."

"Can you?" asked Mr. Elliot earnestly.

"Yes, sir; with God's help I can."

"Fine morning," now said Mr. Gray, who was coming towards them. "I'm five minutes late; but I was doing a job in the house, and it took me longer than I calculated. I'll make it up."

"You did that beforehand. You have gained more than ten times five minutes."

"I don't know about that. I want to keep square with the mill folks, but I'm so behindhand with what I ought to do for my family it takes a great deal to make that up. Then my walk is pretty long. I don't always make allowance enough for that."

"It is too long. We all know that, and there will be a house ready for you before fall. Miss Austen has not forgotten you."

"She aint one of the forgetting kind. But the house I live in now aint so bad. It looks pretty comfortable since I've patched it up, and set the glass in the windows. The chil-

dren keep flowers in every corner and on every shelf; and the walls are all dotted over with what looks as well as pictures to me. We're getting to think a good deal of the old house; and another thing, Mr. Elliot, I could buy it cheap, and have it for my own."

"That is your idea, is it, Gray? Not a bad one either. A man likes to feel that he owns his home, and if you wish to stay there I presume Miss Austen will have no objection. Do your wife and children like the old house as well as you do?"

"Yes, sir; and they're always at something to make it look better. If I do say it myself it's as clean and comfortable a place as the best. We don't expect anything grand, and we don't care about it. It's good enough for us."

"It is better than my cottage," said Mr. Elliot. "There is plenty of room for even a larger family than yours; and if you keep on as you have begun, you will be able to pay for it and fix it up at the same time. You can speak to Miss Austen about it."

The men were not idle while talking, and whatever was Mr. Gray's indebtedness to his employer, he more than repaid it before the bell summoned him to dinner provided at the mill boarding-house. He walked with Mr. Elliot, and seeing Mason Stuart, remarked:

"That boy didn't care about making us another visit to-day."

"I think strength has been wanting rather than inclination. He would have been sure to come unless prevented."

"Well, I'm always glad to see him. The folks belonging to the great house are all of a-piece: up and down, but as good as need be. When the Thursday evening meetings started, folks round here said there wa'n't much to be expected from a woman and a young man that thought it worth while to light up a room where they could talk about ducks and geese. I heard a good deal said after that fashion, and I helped it along; but I'm ashamed enough of it now. There was Muzzy, too, always at it. We were in the

same boat, and he stays in, while I am fairly out of it."

"A miserable, unseaworthy boat it is, Gray. The wonder is that we were able to get out of it alive. A kind providence was all that saved us. God employs human means, but it is His power which brings salvation."

"I believe you, Mr. Elliot. I believe you with all my heart. You never spoke a truer word than that, and God be praised for all his mercies."

"Amen!" was the reverent response, as these men parted, while those who observed them never dreamed what grateful, loving hearts were throbbing in their bosoms.

CHAPTER VI.

NORAH BORINE.

I AM afraid Mr. Gray will think I have forgotten about helping Harold, to pay for what he helped me when I was exploring a mole's tunnel," remarked Mason Stuart at the dinner-table. "I promised, but I couldn't go over there to-day."

"There is no reason why you should," replied his brother. "Harold will be all the better for some variety of occupation."

"No matter for that, Ed. That is nothing to the purpose. When I promise, I mean what I say, and I make my promises good. I shall pick stones an hour some day. A variety of occupation won't hurt me any more than it will Harold."

"You can be your own judge in regard to

that, unless Aunt Margaret chooses to assert her authority."

"She has asserted it to-day. She told me I must stay in the shade and think quietly, and I have done the best I could to obey. It was easy enough to stay in the right place; but my thoughts *would* come tumbling over each other, in the same way they always do. Robert thinks all the time, too, but he don't get so stirred up as I do. Do you ever get all stirred up, Ed?"

"Perhaps not in just the way that you do, although I think I have a liberal supply of enthusiasm. If I am interested in a subject it seems to me of very great importance."

"I am glad to hear that, 'though your eyes didn't snap quite enough when you said it. The way it is with me, when I am interested in any subject, I don't begin to feel satisfied until I know all about it. If there is anything for me to do I just go at it, as though my life depended on what I am doing; and how do I know but it does?"

"You don't know. Your life may sometime depend upon your own exertions, but it is not necessary that you should do the digging for all burrowing animals."

"You are right there, Ed. It tires me dreadfully, and I don't like it; but my head was so full of what I heard last evening I couldn't forget it when I was asleep. Robert said he slept all night without being troubled. He takes things easier than I do, but I don't know as I want to change my ways for his. I shall sleep like a top when I get well, and then I can start again on the old track."

Mason was not alone in comparing himself with his new companion. Robert Bumstead had already reached somewhat definite conclusions in regard to his own abilities as measured by those of the boy who, although his junior, was in many respects his superior. He was steady and persistent, with a quick, intelligent mind. Could he have expressed the thought which in its vagueness half oppressed him, he would have said that, where he must walk carefully to reach a desired

goal, another would bound forward with the fleetness of a gazelle.

"Aunt Margie, Ed made me think of father when I was coming home with him last evening. I felt safe with him just as I used to feel with father. I don't wonder the people here look up to him, do you?"

"I never wondered at it," said Miss Austen, in reply to her young nephew's remark. "I should not have chosen him as my business partner if I had not considered him worthy of confidence both in head and heart. Two persons may be equally good and reliable, while possessing many different characteristics. I don't expect you will ever be like Edward; but I shall be sadly disappointed, if you are not his equal in all sterling qualities."

"I know what you mean Aunt Margaret. You think I want Ed to be just the same driving kind of a fellow that I am."

"Not exactly that, Mason, but I *do* think you are a little inclined to underrate Edward and Clarke, because they are less de-

monstrative than you are, and have regard for some things you care nothing about."

"I see, and you are right about it, too, Margie. They don't always start up as quick as I want them to. They stop too long to fix up; or else they take time to consider and calculate, when I pitch in head-first. That is a little slangy, but it expresses exactly what I want to say."

"I presume it does, so I will not find fault with you. I don't expect you to talk like Deacon Goddard, but while you are here I think it will be proper for you to call your brother, Edward, instead of Ed."

"I think so, too, Aunt Margaret. I ought to have thought of it before, but I didn't. I needed a lesson to-day, and I thank you for giving me one. I shall remember it. Strange, how things are linked together, and how many different people that we never heard of had an interest in our ten thousand dollars. When we lost it, we gained more than we lost. Other people gained too: all who live around here, and all who work in

the mill; and my brother Edward gained immensely."

"I trust you are right in your conclusions, Mason, and that we shall all have reason to bless the day when we started up the old mill. We have only well commenced our work here yet, but I have faith that we shall carry it through successfully. We have some boys and girls here I hope to see grow up into noble men and women."

"There are Jessie and Norah. I don't see why Norah didn't go to Mr. Elliot's. I know Jessie was disappointed."

Norah Borine had declined Jessie Elliot's invitation; and yet, through all the evening she was restless and unhappy; dissatisfied with herself and with others, because of remaining at home when she wished to be elsewhere.

"What's the matter with you?" asked her grandmother. "I'm thinking you're at your book too much."

"No, I aint granny. I aint at my book half enough. I guess that's what's the matter. I'm lonesome."

"Lonesome with your mother and granny! That ever that should be! Where's the teacher?"

"At home, and not likely to be wanting me."

"She always seems glad when you speak to her. She smooths out the wrinkles in your face and brightens you up."

"She does that for everybody, she is so bright herself; but I won't trouble her."

"You'll be walking with her again when the sun shines."

"I hope so. It's beautiful to go with her. I wish you and mother could see things as she does."

"Well, honey, we'd be different, to please you, if we could, but it's not for the likes of us. We'll help you. Don't you know you're granny's darling, and she working hard so you can learn with the best. Ah! me, what would be to us but for Mr. Stuart! We'll bless him every day of our lives. And the brother! He's a gintleman, young as he is; every inch a gintleman. He speaks to me as though I was a leddy, like the mistress herself."

"And isn't she the nicest lady, granny?"

"Sure I'm thinking there's not another like her."

"And, granny, Jessie Elliot says it's her religion makes her so. Perhaps we might be a little bit like her, if we had the same religion."

"That iver I should hear the likes of that from my own flesh and blood! You're not turning heretic, be you? Sorra the day I live to see that."

"What is a heretic, granny?"

"One outside the true church; that despises the Houly Virgin and the prastes."

Mrs. Rady checked herself before consigning all heretics to the wretchedness she had been taught to believe awaited them. She remembered her employers, whose uprightness and kindness had won her affectionate regards.

"But the Virgin was only a woman," said Norah. "I asked Jessie, and she told me; and in the meeting, they all said God would hear our prayers, no matter how bad we are.

The priests are only men. Are they any better than Mr. Stuart?"

"Hush, child. You've no right to say such things."

"But, mother, she only asked a question," rejoined Mrs. Borine, whose own heart had been touched by some influence she could not understand.

"I'm not to answer everything," was replied sharply. "Mister Stuart's that above me, I'd not say a word to his hurt."

"His God is just the same as yours, granny. There aint but one, is there?"

"You can answer that, mother."

"Yes; there aint but one God for the whole world. Now don't be troubling me. The master and the mistress have a right to their own religion, but we'll kape to ours."

"And never go to the meeting? Can't I go, mother?"

"I don't know. We'll wait and see. Now mind your book, there's a good girl. When Miss Greenleaf has your dress done you shall go somewhere."

"The meeting is all the place there is to go to, except the school and the woods. Mother, will we ever have more rooms to live in than just these three?"

"I don't know, child. Why?"

"Because other folks are going to have bigger houses and nicer things. I hear the children talk about it. Mr. Elliot has begun to make his house bigger. I'm real glad too; because Jessie wants it, and she's so good. I wish I was like her."

Yet, notwithstanding her cordial admiration of this friend, she was unwilling to meet Jessie Elliot, and it was not until recess that the latter found an opportunity to speak to her.

"Why didn't you come last evening?" was then asked reproachfully. "Robert told a real good story, and all but me knew something nice to say. I can't think why you wouldn't come. We all wanted you."

"Well, Jessie Elliot, I wish I had gone," answered Norah. "I didn't have a bit of good time last evening. There was some-

thing pulling at me every minute, just as though I was where I didn't belong. I'm different from anybody else, and I want you to tell me what the matter is with me. You know, and I shan't be mad at what you say. Don't you mind a bit if I do get hot and let my eyes snap. I shall get over it in a minute. I've got a horrid temper. I heard somebody say that about one of the neighbors, and then I knew that was the matter with me; but that aint all. I do feel so awful when things don't go to suit me. I want to bite and scratch everybody that comes near me. I suppose you'll think that's dreadful; and I shouldn't wonder if you never want to speak to me again as long as you live. I don't want to do so. But I heat up in a minute, and then I forget how bad it is. I'm a fool for telling you; but you knew it all before, didn't you?"

"I knew some," replied Jessie frankly." But that don't make any difference with the way I feel toward you. I love you ever so

much, and I don't want to tell you anything to make you feel bad."

"Didn't I ever make *you* feel bad?"

"Yes, but I don't think you meant to."

"Perhaps I didn't, but more likely I didn't care."

"I guess one matter with you is, you don't want folks to love you."

"Yes I do want to be loved too. I want everybody to love me;" and this passionate exclamation ended with a half-stifled sob. "Don't you suppose love is just as good to me as it is to you?"

"It don't seem as though it could be. You act almost the same as if you put out your hands to push everybody away."

"That's because — because — I can't tell it. It hurts me, so I can't."

"Do tell," urged Jessie. "It don't hurt you so when somebody else knows just how you feel. I used to tell Miss Greenleaf my troubles, and then I felt better."

"Well, I'll tell you. I'm Irish, and my father was a wicked man, and he ran away,

and I guess he is dead. I hope he is too. Mother don't talk about him; but she tells me sometimes that I look like him, and I think that is dreadful. Besides that, we are poor. Now you know."

"I know you look real handsome. Everybody says so. It is real bad to have a father that is a drunkard. I know, and I have been a great deal poorer than you ever were. I didn't have any mother or grandmother either; and when my father came to see me, he was so bad it made me sorrier than when I was all alone. Why he let me be real hungry after my mother died; and then he carried me off where I didn't know anybody, and left me with a woman that made me work awful hard. I used to cry myself to sleep in a little dark place every night. Oh dear! I don't like to tell it; and I wouldn't, only so you can know you haven't been so poor as I have. Father took me away from that place, and then I went where I could go to school to Miss Greenleaf. It was a great deal better there, but I had to work hard. The woman

I lived with was poor, and she had to work hard herself, but she didn't scold me much. Sometimes she kissed me, and that made me almost happy."

"Jessie Elliot, have you been telling me the real truth?"

"Yes I have. I never tell lies."

"Then don't you hate your father?"

"No, I love him. He is the best father in the world. I always loved him and prayed for him."

"What made him change?"

"He stopped drinking anything bad, and tried to do just right. Then he came here, and everybody grows better here. Now he is a Christian."

"What is it to be a Christian?"

"It is to love God, and pray to Him, and do as the Bible tells you. You can't do that unless you read the Bible, so to know what is in it."

"I'm afraid I shan't ever be a Christian. If my father is alive anywhere, and he should get to be a Christian, would he be good, like your father?"

"He would be good, but I don't suppose he would be like my father, any more than you can be like me."

"You have told me one thing that makes me different; now tell me another."

"I will if you want me to. You act cross, just as though you almost hated us and didn't want us to come near you. You know it was ever so long before you liked Miss Austen."

"No it wasn't. I liked her real quick, but I thought she wouldn't want such a poor child as I am 'round her, unless it was because she pitied me; and I won't be pitied. Why, I could just kneel down to Miss Austen and Miss Greenleaf, I love them so."

"Then why don't you act out your love?"

"I should be afraid they wouldn't like it."

"Why don't you treat the boys better? It is too bad of you, Norah, when they are so good, and want to help you. They like you too."

"No, they don't. They can't. I suppose they pity me. What should they like me for? I'd help them if I could, but I don't

want them to help me. They are all Christians, aint they?"

"I hope so, and of course they want to be good and kind to everybody. What do you suppose makes me like you?"

"I don't know, and any way you can't like me as well as I do you. When I love anybody, I — I —." Here words failed, and tears testified to the intensity of Norah's emotion. "I aint crying for anything, only because I can't help it," she said at length, and waiting a moment, she asked: "Have you told me all the things that make me different from other girls?"

"No, I haven't," answered Jessie decidedly. "I wouldn't either, if you didn't feel so bad; because I don't know but it will make you too proud. You are handsomer and smarter than any other girl I know of. You can do things quicker and nicer, and you always understand in a minute."

"I don't see how that can be true. When I look in the glass I always think I'm so

homely there can't anybody like me. Why, I'm real black beside you."

"Your skin is dark, but it is just as clear and smooth as can be. Your hair and your eyes are black, just as they ought to be to go with your face. They are handsome, too; only when you get mad your eyes are almost ugly."

The flash came, but with a great effort Norah restrained herself, asking with an earnestness really pathetic,

"Does anybody besides you think so?"

"Yes, I have heard them talk about it, and I know," was replied.

"It don't seem as though it could be so. Where we lived, before we came here, the boys made fun of me because I'm so black."

"Is that why you don't like boys?"

"Yes. Now I've told you just what was in my heart. It kept growing larger and larger, like something choking me all the time, till it seemed as though I should die if I didn't tell."

"Now I guess it will grow smaller. You won't care any more, will you?"

"I'll try not to; but when I get mad I shall forget."

"Don't get mad."

"How shall I help it? It comes over me before I have time to think."

"You must ask God to keep you from it. Kneel down in some place all alone, and ask God to make you good all through, and make you want to do just right. Then you must try to do right, and not get discouraged."

"Will God hear me?"

"Just as sure as you live He will. The Bible is full of promises about that. You ask Miss Greenleaf. She can tell you better than I can."

"I shan't do it, Jessie Elliot, and if you tell her a word I've said I'll never speak to you again as long as I live. Oh dear! How could I forget so soon! I can't do right."

"You haven't asked God to help you yet."

"I can't. I don't know how. What shall I say?"

"Tell Him just what you want."

"I want everything good."

"But you can't think of everything at once. What do you want most?"

"Not to get so wicked with my temper."

"Then that is the first thing to pray for. Will you?"

"Yes, I will, 'though I'm afraid it won't do any good."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST PRAYER.

WHEN Norah Borine entered her home she closed and locked the door, and then went to the small chamber she occupied with her mother. There was a crucifix upon a stand in the most remote corner. From a nail directly over it depended a rosary of beads, so often counted they had become worn and discolored. This corner was the oratory in which Mrs. Borine performed her devotions, but not here did Norah kneel.

She turned away from the crucifix, and remained fixed and motionless, as though overwhelmed with the thought of what she proposed to do. Her hands were clasped, and her eyes turned reverently upward. At length her lips parted, and in a low but audible voice she confessed her many faults, and

asked for help to correct them. She knew something of confession, so that here she was not at fault. Words came apace. It was as if a fountain, long repressed, had swept away all barriers, pouring forth its waters with a strong, steady flow. There was neither hesitation nor reserve. The suppliant craved the very help she asked.

The shouting of children in the street reminded her there was work to be done; and going below stairs, she threw wide open door and windows, as if inviting company.

Miss Greenleaf came in, bringing the nearly completed dress Norah hoped to wear to the Sunday evening meetings, and she was so happy she could not avoid expressing this hope.

"I am sure you would like the singing, and your voice would be a great addition," was replied.

"Would it?" asked Norah, eagerly, still doubting. "I know you never say only the

truth; but when anybody praises me it seems as though they couldn't mean it."

"I mean all I say to you, Norah;" and a kiss sealed this assurance, giving the child a new sense of companionship.

When left alone she no longer felt herself the only occupant of the room. While her hands were employed, her heart was also doing work, the result of which would appear in the future. She went to the pump for water, and there met Mason Stuart, gentlemanly and polite as usual, asking the privilege of helping her.

"It is kind in you to be willing to do it; but you have been sick, and I don't think you ought to," she replied. "I am able to carry the water myself. This is a light pail mother got on purpose for me."

"I am strong enough to carry such a pail as that full of water, and I want to do it," said Mason.

"Then you may;" and there was a smile upon Norah's face, as she added: "I don't

like to have anybody help me very well, but it's the way here."

"It is a good way too. We all help each other at home, and we all like it. We don't keep debt and credit, either; but I think we come out pretty near even."

"But *we* shan't come out even. I can't do anything for anybody. I wish I could, so to make up for being cross and hateful. I'm sorry I've done so."

"I wouldn't feel very sorry," responded Mason kindly. "Perhaps somebody else was as much to blame as you were. I am so used to girls I don't stop to think but what they are all my sisters or cousins. If I have done anything wrong, I hope you will excuse me."

"Do you mean that, or are you making fun of me?" asked the young girl.

"I mean it," was the quick reply. "I never make fun of anybody that way. It is a mean thing to do, and I know better. I don't want to do it either."

"I'm glad you don't, but I've seen a good many boys that did."

"So have I. I have seen girls, too, and men and women, that were always ridiculing somebody. Now may I come in?" asked Mason as they reached Norah's home, he carrying the pail of water.

"It's a poor place for a boy like you to come to, but you may come in," she replied.

"I have been in a great deal poorer places. It is real clean, and if Aunt Comfort could see it she would say there are marks of good housekeeping here."

"Who is Aunt Comfort?"

To answer this question required considerable time; and when a description had been given of the notable woman, it was closed with a hearty endorsement of her wisdom.

"And you like her, for all she works in the kitchen."

"Of course I do. I guess that is *why* I like her. The kitchen is the pleasantest room in our house."

"We don't have anything but a kitchen and some bedrooms. Isn't that so little?"

"It is a great deal better than not to have anything but a *parlor* and some bedrooms. People can get along without a parlor, but they can't do without a kitchen. Rufus Brown's mother don't have any parlor, but I go there more than I go anywhere else. He is my best boy friend."

"And he is poor and you are rich."

"I am not a bit rich. There is some money in the family, but I am going to work for my living. I work pretty hard now, sometimes, when I am well. I like to. Don't you?"

"I would rather go into the woods, and find flowers and everything pretty."

"So would I part of the time. But the good of working is that you are doing something to help the world along. I would rather crack stones than go into the woods. Perhaps you don't know how pretty stones are inside?"

"No, I don't. I never saw the inside of

any stones. I never thought about anything nice till since I came here. I never picked a bit of moss or lichen, or went after flowers, in all my life; only sometimes I got dandelions for greens. I thought poor folks couldn't do anything but work."

"You were mistaken in thinking so. Some of the smartest men in the world were dreadfully poor boys, who had to do their studying nights, after working hard all day. That is the way they learned."

"But they were boys. Girls can't do so."

"Oh yes they can; only I don't think girls ought to work so hard, 'though some do. Indian women do all the hard work, while the men laze 'round; but at our house we calculate to have the hard jobs come on the boys, where they belong. My sisters do things for me I can't do for myself, and I do for them what they can't do. When it comes to head work, a girl's head is as good as a boy's. That is what Aunt Margaret says, and if her head isn't as good as any man's, I should like to know the reason."

As it was time for Norah to prepare supper, Mason politely bade her good-evening. No sooner had he gone than she studied her face in the mirror, still seeing the same dark complexion and coal-black hair which had seemed to set her apart from others; turning away with a sigh of regret for the fair skin and golden hair she so much coveted. As yet, there was no danger that pride would render her vain.

But alas for her newly-formed resolutions. The next morning she was angry with herself for having believed what had been said to her, and formed her plans for regaining what she had lost.

Not so Harold Dorsey, who was thankful for friends and friendly appreciation. As he stood with Mr. Peavey, at the door of the cottage, glancing at mountain, hill, and rock, irradiated by the sunlight, he felt within himself the quickening influence of genial surroundings. The transformation in the outer world was a type of his own experience.

"I never saw such a sudden change before in all my life," said the old man.

"A week ago there wa'n't a leaf to be seen on the trees as big as a mouse's ear, and now they're pretty near full grown. It's been a backward spring; but if things keep on as they've begun, the crops won't be behind next August. The herbs are growing fast in the woods, and I saw some with blossoms yesterday. I didn't know but 'twould be too much for me to take such a long walk, but it did me good. I'm stronger than I've been for five years, and next fall I expect the old farm will look as though it had renewed its age. Seems to me I never saw the birds so busy as they be this spring. They're whistling and singing all the time; making music such as there can't anybody else make."

"I used to try to whistle like the birds, when I was alone in the woods, where I knew there wouldn't anybody hear me. I did it for company. I was so lonesome."

"You aint so lonesome now, be you?"

"No, sir. I have something good to think

about, and then there is always somebody to talk with me when I want to talk. I am glad I came here last fall."

Presently two old people were standing together in the doorway looking after a young man whose tall, athletic figure was in itself a tower of strength. Straight onward he went; swinging his arms not ungracefully, and vaulting lightly over the fences in his path.

He was beginning to know something of his own capabilities, and to dream of the possibilities of his future. He was no longer isolated from the world. Even the birds had for him a message of gladness. Every flower looked up to him as with an encouraging smile. It was such a blessed thing to feel that the Almighty Father was watching over him with loving care; how could he despond when all nature was rejoicing?

"Farming promises to be profitable this season," remarked Mr. Elliot, when they met for their day's labor.

"Yes, sir; and it is pleasant work too," responded Harold.

"Would you choose it for your life work?"

"I don't think I would, but I don't know well enough to be quite sure," was the deliberate reply to this question. "I have thought about it, and thought I would just go on and do the best I can."

A grand decision. How much of trouble and anxiety would be saved if only all would just go on and do the best they can! How much of good, remunerative labor is lost to the world by idle waiting; while faculties lose half their power by disuse, and spirits faint for very weariness!

Years before, when Alice Greenleaf first became conscious of a nature refusing to be satisfied with the daily routine sufficing for those around her, her spirit rebelled against the homely toil necessity forced upon her. She could not close her eyes, and so refuse to see this toil; neither could she put it aside. She must accept it; and after a short struggle she did this cheerfully, finding consola-

tion in the thought that her mind was unfettered.

She studied early and late. Her eagerness to learn fostered habits of close observation; so that she was regarded as authority upon various subjects but little understood by her neighbors. She saw what they did *not* see, and heard what they did *not* hear. Life grew to be very dear to her; and as her intellect and tastes were developed, she was able, as we have seen, to create and beautify a home, which was in truth a place of rest and enjoyment.

Here, in Austenville, she had much of companionship. Her pupils loved her, and their parents respected her; not only because of her own intrinsic worth, but because of the attention she received from Miss Austen. Mr. Stuart, too, treated her with great deference, so that she was made to feel herself a valued member of society. The fact that she had taken part in the Sabbath evening meetings also added to her popularity. Mason Stuart was sure she could

teach him many things he needed to learn, but this was not his time for study.

"There goes your brother, in his good clothes," said Mr. Bumstead, one morning, later in the summer, when he had been consulting Mr. Stuart on business.

"Yes, sir; and he values those clothes highly," was replied. "He can go where he pleases now. When he was a little fellow he used to tease Aunt Comfort to give him the very oldest clothes he had, so there would be no occasion for finding fault with him if they were torn or soiled. He looks rough this morning, but it would spoil his pleasure if he he was obliged to dress differently."

"He is well enough, Mr. Stuart. Such as he is don't need fine clothes. He is a gentleman inside. That is what our people all say, and he is bringing the boys to think of their duty to God. It almost broke me down the first time he talked in the Sunday meetings; and he a boy as full of fun as the worst."

"Why not, Mr. Bumstead! I should be sorry to have Mason very much different from what he is now, when he is in good health. His life is full, and he has a keen appreciation of fun; but if he is consistent, that will only make him a better Christian. We need a religion that manifests itself in every-day life."

"Yes, sir; and I am glad that you and the mistress have it. I'll not stand in the way of the rest. My Robert has changed, 'though you would not see it much unless you come close to him. His mother knows it most. Folks say you preach the Bible here seven days in a week, and I am thinking it is better than the minister preaches, 'though I'll not speak against him. I'd not believed you'd get me to church regular as a parson; but Miles Bumstead has learned a good many things since he came here. We have been prospered, Mr. Stuart."

"Yes, sir, thanks to your management."

"Not all mine. There's the mistress, with a head as clear as the best, and learning the

trade like a man, only she don't put her hands to the work. I mind the Saturday night when she put me one side, like the lady she is, and said there could be no work on Sunday. I said to myself: 'Miles Bumstead, have you lived so long to be told by a woman what you must do?' but it was only for a minute. If I'd had my way we'd gone all wrong. You were both right, and I was mistaken in my way. You can't be expecting me to come 'round all of a sudden; but I hope I'll be better sometime."

It was not often that Mr. Bumstead spoke thus freely of his feelings, although his habits were much changed. He was always in his place in church; and also in the hall, which scarcely sufficed to accommodate those who attended the evening meetings. He recited a passage of Scripture; sometimes more than one, but he had never yet declared himself on the Lord's side. Now, with an apology for having detained Mr. Stuart so long, he turned towards the mill.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS SPERRY.

"WE had such a nice breakfast this morning," said Jessie Elliot to her friend Norah, as they walked to school together. "Mason Stuart brought us some fish. He and Harold and Robert went fishing yesterday, and they got a splendid lot of fish."

"I know they did. Mason brought us some, and I wanted to ask Miss Greenleaf to eat breakfast with us; but I was afraid to," was replied.

"Why, Norah, I shouldn't think you would be a bit afraid. Your room is as clean as can be, and it is a great deal larger than the one she used to live in. I am going to ask her to take tea with me sometime."

"I wish I could. Do you suppose she

would come of a Sunday, when granny and mother are at home?"

"I am sure she would. She wouldn't think it was wicked visiting. Why shouldn't she come?"

"I don't know, only —"

"Norah Borine, you are the proudest girl I ever saw."

"I haven't a single thing to be proud of, but Miss Greenleaf must be used to nicer things than we have."

"She is used to nice *clean* things. Her tablecloth was just as white as could be; but it was real coarse, and I have seen it when it was mended. It is being clean that makes a house look nice."

"Perhaps it is, but we have got a tablecloth that is fine and white, and not a patch on it. I am so glad of that, and I'll ask mother and granny."

When Norah made her request Mrs. Rady was more astonished than ever before. Indeed, she almost wondered if she was the same woman whose only ambition had been

to provide shelter, food, and clothing for herself and her children. She was prospering pecuniarily. She could afford to entertain company.

"I don't think the teacher 'll be wanting to come, but you can ask her," she replied, at length, to Norah's importunities, and the child hastened to avail herself of the privilege thus granted.

"Miss Greenleaf *will* come. She told me she should be very glad to come, and she never tells what isn't true. She said she would come just as soon as she gets home from church."

This was Norah's triumphant message, when she reported to her grandmother the acceptance of her invitation, adding:

"Now we shall be like other folks. Everybody else has company."

"We've had company before now."

"Yes, granny; but this will be different."

"You're growing away from the old woman, honey, but I'm not sorry, for your own sake. You're the light of my eyes,

and your mother's too. You'll not spend your days winding the shuttle."

"I hope not, granny. I want to do something better."

"And you shall, me darling, if there's strength left in me old bones to work for you."

"O granny, how good you are to me, and how much I have to make me happy! It seems as though I never should feel bad again."

"Don't, honey. It hurts me all through when you do, and it hurts your mother too. Sure, you must think we know you're different from us, but we love you."

The Sabbath dawned bright and beautiful, bringing a sense of restful quiet to the dwellers in Austenville. A larger number than usual attended church; some walking, and some riding. The preacher had learned to regard the mill people as an important part of his congregation; while those who had long struggled to resist the growing

spirit of worldliness and indifference to holy things took heart again.

Norah watched impatiently for the return of Miss Greenleaf, who came at last, her face wearing the same pleasant smile which had made many forget its plainness. The supper was all Mrs. Rady, herself, could desire. The guest knew how to adapt her conversation to those who entertained her, and appreciating their kindness, expressed her appreciation heartily.

For the time, Norah Borine was perfectly happy. She listened with delight to the words of her teacher. She then, for the first time perhaps, recognized the truth that there may be a diversity of gifts, without the possessor of either rightfully claiming superiority; so that her mother and grandmother appeared to her in a new light.

"It is nearly time for our evening meeting," at length said Miss Greenleaf after glancing at her watch.

"And must you go?" asked Mrs. Rady.

"I am never willing to remain away,"

was replied courteously. "Our Sunday evening meetings help me through all the week."

"That's what I hear others say, and sure I'm glad for all the comfort anybody gets."

"Mother, do let me go to-night," now said Norah pleadingly. "You are willing, aint you, granny?"

"It will be as your mother says, 'though I'm thinking you might go for once. Miss Greenleaf, you know we're Catholics."

"It does not matter by what name we are called, if we only love God supremely, and our neighbor as ourselves."

"Is that your religion?"

"It is the religion I profess."

"I'm thinking you live up to it, and the master and mistress too."

"I am sure we intend to live up to it. Thank you for inviting me here to-day; and now, when Norah is ready, we will go."

There was no need of waiting. The child was the more impatient of the two; and

when they entered the hall she took a seat by Jessie, who whispered:

"You can look over in my hymn-book. I am ever so glad you came."

"I am gladder than you are," was replied; and this sufficed for their greetings.

There had never been such a meeting in that hall; never such prayers and such singing. There were no long pauses to dishearten and embarrass. Even Norah repeated a passage of Scripture she had learned in school during the week. She would certainly go again, and when she reported to her mother and grandmother they offered no objection.

"It was all so beautiful, and everybody seemed happy, except the ones who said they had been doing wrong all their lives, and they were afraid God wouldn't forgive them. Then Mr. Elliot got up and told them God would forgive them if they asked him; so they needn't feel bad any more, if they would only try and do the best they could the rest of the time. It seemed as

though he meant me with the rest. Any way, I am going to try and do as right as I can; and I wish, mother, you would buy me a Testament for my own, so I needn't always have to look over with Jessie to read my verse. Mr. Gatchell has got some real pretty Testaments. I saw them there the other day, and I heard him tell somebody he had sold lots of them."

"Would you mind, mother?" asked Mrs. Borine.

"No; let the child have one. We're not that poor that she must borrow of a neighbor," answered Mrs. Rady.

So Mr. Gatchell sold another Testament the next day, wondering, as he did so, who would *not* buy. Testaments seemed to have taken the place of liquors, and the store was fast becoming popular throughout the town. People who came to see how the mill neighborhood had changed were almost sure to visit Gatchell's.

"Is this the store, same as it used to be?" asked a poor woman who had walked three

miles to "do some trading and look 'round a little."

"It's the same house, and I'm mostly the same man," replied the storekeeper. "Sit down and rest you. You must be tired."

"I am. I've been tired before when I came here, but you didn't ask me to sit down. Who is that boy going by?"

"That's Mason Stuart, Miss Austen's nephew, and the widest-awake boy there is in ten states. Good, too, as the best."

"Is he the pious one that talks in meeting?"

"He talks in meeting, and he's a Christian; one of the golden-rule sort; ready to lend a helping hand to anybody that needs it."

"I wish some of that sort would come our way. There aint no very near neighbors, and it seems sometimes as though I was clear out of the world. I've been wanting to come over here ever since the snow went off; but I've had work to do, and I must improve my time. Then I

thought I'd try and bring a dozen pair of socks when I came; so I waited to finish them up. They're nice ones, Mr. Gatchell, made of good wool, and knit as well as I know how to knit them."

This last remark was made as the socks were diplayed and examined.

"They're good enough for anybody, Miss Sperry, and they're just what Miss Austen will want for Mr. Stuart. She was looking for some here last winter, and she'll buy them just as soon as if he wanted to wear them now. I know she'll be glad to take half of them, and likely she'll pay you more than I can afford to. I shouldn't think strange either if you found a market for the whole. She'll pay money, too, and then you'll have it in your hand to do what you're a mind to with. Mr. Bumstead is getting particular about what he wears; and then there is Mr. Elliot, who knows the difference between coarse and fine as well as Mr. Stuart himself. You better

go over to the great house when you get rested."

"Don't you want the socks, Mr. Gatchell?"

"Yes, Miss Sperry, I do. I'm ready to take every pair of them, but I think you could do better with Miss Austen. I'm advising you for your own good. Go over there and sell your socks for money, and I'll sell you what you want to buy, as cheap as I can any way afford to, and send the things over to your house sometime this week. There'll be a chance, or if there aint I'll make one."

The poor woman looked the surprise she felt, and her companion, interpreting the look, made reply:

"It's pretty hard for you to believe that I'm looking out for your interest instead of my own."

"Well, Mr. Gatchell, I aint going to say but what you've guessed right about that. Storekeepers generally want the best end of a bargain."

"They do; and perhaps I've been as

hard as any of them, but I calculate now to trade fair. If I didn't, I couldn't do much in this neighborhood. I'll take your socks and allow you every cent I can get for them, but you better carry them to market yourself."

"I aint used to grand folks, Mr. Gatchell. I'd 'most as lief sell them under price, poor as I am, as to go over there. I need all I can get, everybody knows. Cousin Esther's at work; but I don't want to depend on her, if I did give her a home when she hadn't anywhere to go."

"You did well for her, and she's a good girl. She had better come over here and work in the mill. She can earn more than she can doing anything else, except teaching school."

"That's what she wants to do, but she haint got learning enough. She haint had much chance for schooling. Her father didn't think there was any need of her going to school, and when she lived with me there wasn't much for her to go to.

Now I'll take your advice and go to the great house, 'though my mind misgives me that it's no place for such as I am."

Slowly and reluctantly the woman went on her way; so little accustomed to the sight of strangers, and having so little confidence in herself, that it cost her a painful effort even to *decide* to call upon Miss Austen. Fortunately she was expected; Mr. Gatchell having had an opportunity to tell Mason Stuart in regard to her.

"I just sent your Aunt Margaret a visitor," said the storekeeper, as he beckoned to Mason, who was passing. "She's going down the road now; a good, clever soul as ever was, 'though she haint had much chance to be anybody. She's got a dozen pair of mens' socks, as nice as I ever saw, and I thought she might find a market for them at your house. She needs all the money she can get. She lives off from the main road, and has a pretty lonesome time of it, besides being poor. I thought you

might tell your aunt about her if you get home first."

"I will; and I will be sure to get home first."

It was easy to do this. Miss Sperry walked more slowly, stopping at last and turning half around, as if to retrace her steps. But she did not go back, although Miss Austen waited several minutes for her appearance.

The instant her timid rap was heard Mason went to the door and invited her into the sitting-room, where the lady whose presence she had feared met her so cordially she soon forgot all embarrassment. Her knitting was praised, and the socks purchased at a higher price than she had dared to hope. Seated in a comfortable arm-chair, her heavy bonnet laid aside, her homely face was lighted up with a smile of contentment and satisfaction.

"Well, Miss Sperry, you've made quite a visit," said Mr. Gatchell when she again entered the store. "You look ten years

younger than you did this morning, and I guess you feel so too. You've got rested, haint you?"

"Yes, I have, and I've had the best visit I ever had in my life. I never saw anything like it. I was just taken in and treated as if I'd been a lady. Miss Austen took all my socks, and paid me more than I ever got before. I thank you for sending me there."

"I knew you'd be glad you went there, and I expect, now, you'll believe I was looking out for your advantage instead of my own."

"Yes, I will. But, you see, I wan't expecting it, 'though folks say you've changed a good deal since the mill started up. When Tom Gray lived in the old house next to mine, the one that tumbled down, I thought you were pretty hard with him. Anyway, he spent most of his earnings here, without his family being much better off for it."

"They're better off for what he spends here now. The truth is, we've both

changed, and it aint for the worse either. Now what can I sell you this afternoon?"

Her purchases were not large, yet they were more than she could carry without inconvenience, and a neighbor coming in, he offered to take her and her bundles home, so that she was spared the fatigue of walking. It had been a good day, and the evening was enlivened by the memory of the kindness she had received.

Her frugal supper gained a new relish, and as the rays of the setting sun brightened her plain room, she thought how much she had for which to be thankful. A single act of kindness, with a few cordial words spoken from the heart, and so reaching another heart, had stirred her best and deepest feelings.

Mr. Gatchell would have wondered much had he known what record was set over against his name, for having once regarded his neighbor rather than himself. Miss Austen, wise as she was, did not dream of the good she had wrought while doing only what was a pleasure for her to do.

Mason, however, seemed to have some idea of it, when he said:

"Aunt Margaret, the money you gave Miss Sperry wasn't the best thing you gave her."

"What was it, the dinner?"

"No, ma'am; 'though I'm sure she liked that, especially the tea. You made her feel that she was of some account, as Aunt Comfort says. She looked dreadfully poor and discouraged when she came in, and when she went out she looked real happy. I hope, when I grow up, I can make folks happy."

"I expect you will. All that is necessary is to show them the bright side of things."

"But some people won't see the bright side. There is Uncle Fielding. He will make a dark side anywhere. He is always fretting, and tiring everybody. It is hard for Dick and all the rest of them. Hester said he almost made up his mind he wouldn't let his family come up here this summer. I am not going to say anything more about

him," added the speaker, deprecating a reproof. "That was in a private note, Hester didn't expect any one else to know about, but I never can keep anything from you very long. I shall be ever so glad to see them all, 'though when they come I must begin to think about going home."

CHAPTER IX.

A SUMMER VACATION.

WHEN Mrs. Stuart reached the railroad station where she was to stop with her company of young people, the first to meet her was Mason, sun-browned and radiant.

"O mother, I'm so glad to see you," he exclaimed, throwing his arms around her. "I am glad to see all the rest of you," he added directly, giving each a hearty handshake, "with kisses thrown in," as Clarke afterwards described the welcome.

Edward Stuart was detained at the mill; but Mr. Bumstead, who had come in his place, was equal to the occasion. Mason observed his brother closely, as the latter was introduced to the stout, good-natured



A SUMMER VACATION.

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Englishman, and decided that Clarke had left fancy manners behind him.

"How you have grown!" was the exclamation which greeted the country boy on every side; while he, in turn, had his criticisms to make.

"Are we all going in that big wagon?" asked Sadie.

"Yes, every one of us, trunks and all," was the reply.

"There's plenty of room and plenty of strength," added Mr. Bumstead, who had overheard the question. "Our carriage never gets too full except of a Sunday. It's a carriage when the floor is carpeted, and a wagon the rest of the time. Likely there will be a coach when the right time comes, but there can never be better horses."

Ample room was found for all, and despite their load, these horses started forward at a brisk trot. It was a lovely day. Hillsides were clothed with richest verdure, while vallies lay fair and green in the mellow light. Here and there was the sparkle of water,

at rest, or flowing between flower-fringed banks.

Exclamations of delight followed each other in rapid succession. Madge saw every bird which flitted by, and turned a questioning glance towards every shrub and tussock of grass where a nest might be concealed. Hester saw butterflies, dragon-flies, and bees; while Dick Fielding remarked upon the luxuriant and graceful growth of forest trees.

"There is our house," said Mason, when the white chimnies could be seen. "If you could look into the kitchen you would see busy work there. I used to think Aunt Comfort could do better for a hungry boy than anybody else; but Mrs. Bumstead can do just as well. Austenville is a grand place, and the people here are all 'number one.' Miss Austen is a lady, and Mr. Stuart is a gentleman, and this is where they are appreciated."

Miss Austen stood upon the piazza to receive her guests, the youngest first claim-

ing attention. Mrs. Bumstead remained in her own province, which was presently invaded by a bevy of girls.

"Six, and every one welcome, 'though I'm not knowing how ever I'll get along with you," she said smilingly after all had been introduced. "I've only had boys, but I've been longing for girls my whole life."

"And you will have them now, Mrs. Bumstead. You will like them too. I do."

A shout of laughter followed Mason's frank confession, and a clamor of voices drowned whatever explanation he might have made, until he joined in the general merriment.

Edward Stuart hastened to the house, impatient to see the dear, familiar faces of brother, sisters, and cousins, yet longing most of all for his mother.

"My son!"

She could say no more; so like was he to what his father had been, when she, as Mary Austen, watched for the coming of one whose presence filled her heart with joy.

"You have changed very much," she said soon after, when he seated himself beside her. "You have lost the scholarly look which marked your face a year ago."

"And gained something in its place?" he questioned.

"Yes, you are looking more like your father. I was very ambitious for you, but I suppose it was best that you should give up your books. I hope you will not regret it when you are older."

"There is no danger that I shall. I was never more ambitious, and never more sure of reaching the goal of my ambition. But we can talk of that another time. There is the supper bell."

Robert's introduction came last, and a severe ordeal it was, notwithstanding Mason's encouraging words.

"You will be obliged to see the girls, and you may as well speak to them now as ever," said the importunate boy. "You will get used to them in a little while, and like them tiptop. If you don't, I shan't

think much of you any way. You can't help it. There they are all together. Come. I know Hester and Sadie and Lilla will want to see your chickens put to bed."

What Robert said, or whether he said anything, when the different names were called, he could not tell; but later, he proved himself fully competent to answer all questions in regard to the doves and chickens, which were his especial pride.

The resources of the house had not been overestimated. There was no need to send Mason to the barn, although he would not have considered it a hardship to sleep upon the fragrant hay. He was early astir the next morning, going into the kitchen soon after the fire was lighted in the large cooking-stove.

"I was so wide awake I couldn't keep still another minute," he replied to Mrs. Bumstead's expressions of surprise at seeing him. "There is so much to be done,

I must get a good start; and there is Dick too."

"Good-morning, Mason. I hope you are well this morning."

"I am very well, and in no need of medicine; but there are lots of things I want to talk about with you. Sit down and make yourself at home, and tell me if you have seen Rufe Brown lately."

"I went to his mother's the evening before we left home, so that I could bring you the latest news. He is working hard; but he says it pays, and he hopes to go to school next winter. He keeps up with his classes, and learns a good many things not put down in the books."

"He always did that. He hasn't written to me for ever so long, but I know we are just as good friends as we ever were. When I am sure of people, I don't need to have them keep telling me they love me all the time; 'though I think it does a fellow good to hear it once in a while, don't you, Dick?"

"Yes, I do; but you can trust Rufus.

He said he had intended to write to you; but when he gets home at night, tired as he is, he studies his lessons, and sometimes goes to sleep over his books."

"I know how he does, and he is a splendid fellow. Has he a good garden?"

"Very good, and the best piece of corn I ever saw. It is only a small piece, but he will have a splendid crop. It is a wonder to me how he crowds so much into the days so many other people spend in idleness."

"It is because he is made of the right stuff. I like to help him when I can, and he helps himself so much, it is easy to do it. A good many want you to do the whole. They are the kind Aunt Comfort calls shiftless. I should think Rufe Brown better come here, if he wasn't needed where he is. I shouldn't wonder if you want to stay here yourself. Everybody amounts to something here. The days go by so fast a fellow has to hurry to keep up. I couldn't when I first came, but I can now."

"I am glad to hear that. I thought you

would gain faster here than at home. We were anxious about you. If we had lost you, there would have been a vacant place in our circle no one else could fill."

"It would have been all right, but I am glad you are not to lose me. I don't think people know half how grand a thing it is to be alive in such a beautiful world as this. I never thought so much about it till this summer; and now, if I don't fill every day full of something good for myself or somebody else, it will be because I can't. I used to have the queerest feelings after I fell into the water. It seemed as though something I wanted to keep was slipping away from me, and I got so tired trying to hold it, I was almost ready to give up. You can't think just how it was, but you may as well remember about it."

"I will. No bit of knowledge ever comes amiss."

"But Aunt Margie says there are some things we better not know. She burned some of Uncle William's books last week,

because she didn't want any one to read them. There are plenty of good books left, and Aunt Margie is going to have a library for the mill people. The Thursday evening meetings will begin again this fall. You will go to the Sunday evening meetings while you are here, and you will be expected to take a part in them. You will want to, too, if you are a Christian, and I hope you are. You ought to be."

"That is true. But I have not inquired about your ankle. Does it trouble you?"

"Not a bit. I can tramp as many miles as you can; and that makes me think that we are planning for a week in the woods, if we can get Mr. Elliot and Harold Dorsey to go with us. I want you to get at Harold Dorsey the first thing. It took me a good while, but it won't take you long. There is Mr. Elliot in his garden. He is the busiest man I ever saw. He can do almost anything, besides being a splendid scholar. Halloo! There is Clarke. The house must be waking up. When the second bell rings everybody

in the village will begin to move, and when the third bell rings everything in the mill will start up with a whir and a buzz. You will all want to go down to the mill and see how things look there."

It was the chief place of interest, and, with the exception of Mrs. Stuart, the visitors went through the old stone mill; while Mason described and explained the entire process of manufacturing.

"Who is agent of this concern?" at length asked Clarke.

"Aunt Margaret, and I am her confidential clerk," was the quick reply. "If you ever arrive at such honor, you may think yourself fortunate. There is Harold Dorsey the other side of the brook. You can take a good look at him and see what sort of fellows are brought up in the woods. It will pay you to cultivate his acquaintance. If we try camping out, you will be glad to have him somewhere 'round, and it is just possible you know some things he would be glad to learn."

"He has a figure to be proud of," responded Clarke Stuart, watching the young man striding across the meadow, so lightly clad that his well-knit form was displayed to the best advantage. "I wonder if he knows how to appreciate himself?"

"He does know that exactly. He knows he was made to be of use in the world, and he takes hold of hard work without gloves. He is splendid, but you will need to go more than half way if you want to get acquainted with him. You won't find anybody here very anxious to gain your favor, and it is the poorest place to put on airs you ever saw."

The words had been spoken, and the speaker was relieved of further responsibility, but Clarke Stuart hardly needed the enforcement of a lesson he was fast learning by observation. He wondered at the friendliness and courtesy between those in such different positions, yet he was too wise to give utterance to his thoughts; and before the day had passed his wonder changed to

admiration. All were working for a common cause; the prosperity of Austenville.

His aunt seemed to him a grander woman than when she reigned in the dear old home. He was deeply impressed with his brother's superiority, and the unostentatious manner in which every duty was performed. For the first time, he could say, with Mason, that he was glad of the loss which had necessitated a change of plans for himself and others.

Yet it was not with a wholly untroubled spirit that he retired to rest the second night after he arrived at the great house. He slept but little, rising the next morning with a headache, which, however, was soon forgotten. With so much to see and hear, there was little time to think of personal feelings.

"What a romantic history that fellow has," he remarked to his aunt, as he saw Harold Dorsey coming towards the house.

"He has led a strange life," was replied. "There is a mystery about it which I hope will sometime be solved. I have often at-

tempted to form some theory by which to account for the isolation of an old man and child through a succession of years. Mr. Elliot believes that they were not at all related to each other."

"What does Harold think?"

"He told the people with whom he now finds a home that he does not allow himself to think of it. He says he can make a future for himself, and he is willing to leave the past with God. In many ways he has been admirably taught, while in some things he has been terribly wronged."

"You have interesting characters here in Austenville. One would naturally expect to find very commonplace people in such a factory village as this, but your workmen and workwomen seem to be very much above the average."

"Perhaps you are not qualified to judge of the average. I certainly was not."

"Then I must certainly plead ignorance; but I have always thought of such workers as almost a part of the machinery of a mill."

"You have been mistaken in that thought, although, under some conditions, factory-workers are regarded as but little better than machines. Here, in our little village, we intend that the conditions of life shall foster intelligence and goodness. It is not enough that a man or woman is not bad. Every one should be thoroughly good."

"And energetic," added Clarke Stuart. "I know that energy is included in your idea of goodness."

"Certainly it is," answered Miss Austen. "There are sins of *o*mission as well as of *com*mission; and the results of the former may be as disastrous as those of the latter."

"Aunt Margie, you should have been a minister. You would preach splendid sermons."

"Aunt Margie has always preached splendid sermons," now said Dick Fielding, who had heard his cousin's last remark. "She has been preaching ever since I can remember, and she has preached to an attentive congregation."

"I hope my sermons will have their legitimate effect. I have always tried to live to some purpose; but since I came here, I feel that I have only just begun my life-work. I am a middle-aged woman, looking westward; yet life is more to me now than ever before."

"Does that mean that you are growing old?" asked Mason, who had joined the group.

"It means just that," was replied.

"Well, Margie, I suppose every year counts: but when you grow better and handsomer all the time, I shouldn't think you would talk about growing old," said the boy, eagerly scanning the face on which he saw no marks of age.

This matter being settled to his satisfaction, he proposed to his brother that they should make Harold Dorsey a visit; thus leaving their aunt with Dick Fielding, who remarked, presently:

"It is very hard for me to be reconciled to the fact that I have neither part nor lot in

Austenville. I know it is best as it is, because in no other way could you have the control of the property; but I feel very much as though another had sold a part of my birthright. You will be a rich woman, Aunt Margaret."

"Possibly; yet I did not come here that I may make money for the sake of hoarding it, or surrounding myself with extravagant luxuries. I wished in some way to increase my income, and this property was waiting to be utilized. It would have been a great trial to me to see it in the hands of strangers."

"I am glad so much of it is yours; and I am more than glad that what you have invested here is likely to bring you large returns."

"I am both glad and thankful; and if I am allowed to live to carry out my plans, there are many who will have reason to rejoice. I have set apart a certain portion of my income for the expense of your education; so you may feel that you have some interest here as well as your cousins."

"It does not seem right for me to be dependent upon you, Margie."

"I may do what I will with my own, and I shall be more than repaid for all I can do, if I live to see you a noble, Christian man, and a skilful physician. In fitting yourself for your profession, you shall have every advantage which money can give you, and I am sure the money thus spent will prove a profitable investment."

"It shall be if I can make it so," was replied. "I appreciate your kindness, and am more grateful for it than words can express."

CHAPTER X.

CAMPING OUT.

"CAMPING out" was the engrossing topic of conversation, until the girls felt themselves aggrieved at not being allowed to join the party. Mason was in jubilant spirits, examining his old clothes, and consulting Aunt Margaret in regard to his boots, "because mother didn't understand so well about such things."

Mr. Elliot regretted being absent from home, when so much demanded his attention, but there were other considerations influencing him. Jessie watched him closely, half fearing that the old spirit of restlessness would regain its ascendency.

"I am sorry to leave you," he said, the evening before his departure. "I shall hardly know how to live, without seeing you

for two weeks. You make me so happy, I can never do enough for you to repay you."

"Why, father, how can you say so," answered Jessie, nestling closer to him. "It is just as mother said it would be sometime, and I am the happiest girl in the world when you are with me. But — "

Here she paused, as if hesitating to speak her thoughts.

"What is it, child? Tell me all you have in your heart," said her father tenderly.

"I can't," she replied with a sob. "It hurts me just to think of it; and now, you are so good, I don't believe you will want to keep going, as you used to."

"Don't be afraid to trust me, Jessie," responded her father, deeply moved. "I am not sure of my feelings, but — God helping me — I believe I am sure of my actions. When our excursion is over, I shall be glad to come back to you, and sit down again in my own home."

"Oh! I know you will. I knew it, too,

all the time; but I couldn't help thinking."

"Think what a pleasant time you will have with Miss Greenleaf while I am gone, and how happy we shall be together when I return."

"I will, father," said Jessie cheerfully. "I am so glad Miss Greenleaf was willing to stay here, instead of going home for her vacation. Miss Austen is always as kind as kind can be; and Mrs. Bumstead says I am not to cook at all. Norah, too, has grown so good, I have real happy times with her, and her mother has asked me to spend a whole day with her while you are gone. Then Miss Greenleaf and I are going over to Miss Sperry's, visiting. There's somebody over there who wants to learn, and Miss Greenleaf is going to help her. Her name is Esther Wetherell, and perhaps she will come here to work in the mill."

"With so much to take up your time, you will hardly miss me."

A tighter clinging of the arms about his neck made response to this; and Richmond

Elliot needed nothing more to assure him of the love of his little daughter.

The route of the pedestrians had been decided by business considerations. They were to follow up Austen's brook to its source, and learn the probable amount of water which could be controlled. Mr. Elliot was also instructed to confer with the owners of adjacent lands, and report upon the feasibility of purchasing these lands.

This accomplished, the party would be free to go in whatever direction choice might lead them; but Harold had his own plans, of which he had not yet spoken. Something of the influence of former days came upon him, that bright summer morning, as the entire village bade him and his companions a hearty God speed.

"I wish you were going," said Mason to his brother Edward. "Some way you are getting to be like father to me, and if any trouble should come to me, I should want you. I don't believe I shall ever depend upon Clarke as I do upon you. You are a

splendid fellow; and losing that money is going to be the making of us. I shouldn't have this tramp, if that company hadn't failed."

Mason and Robert started a little in advance, walking at their usual rapid pace; but they soon found that this was too great an expenditure of strength.

"Let your moderation be known to us all," shouted Clarke, who had quite entered into the spirit of the occasion.

"You are moderate enough for two," was the good-natured reply. "We are the pioneers, leading the way for those who follow."

Before noon, however, they were willing others should lead; and when a halt was made for dinner, a long rest seemed to them desirable.

Harold volunteered to catch some fish, and cook them in true backwoods style if some one would make the fire. "The doctor" was ready to give assistance with hook and line, while Mr. Elliot kindled the fire; so

that it was not long before the company was invited to dine upon fish, bread, and huge doughnuts, fried by Mrs. Bumstead.

"How did you learn to cook so well?"

"Grandsir taught me," replied Harold Dorsey to this question, which was rather an ejaculation than an inquiry.

There was rough walking before them, but a thousand objects of interest beguiled the weariness of the way. Forest and stream teemed with life. While the larger birds flapped their wings heavily and flew away from intruders, others flitted past with the speed of an arrow. The scarlet tanager, most brilliant of our songsters, betrayed its hiding-place by a flash of color, hardly seen before it had disappeared. The heron and the bittern uttered their notes of alarm, while the wild ducks dipped their glossy breasts noiselessly in the waters of the brook.

"It is a holiday for every living thing," remarked Mr. Elliot. "We are in accord with Nature, and Nature is a kindly mother to her children."

"What is Nature?" asked Clarke Stuart.

"Nature is to me the everlasting God revealed in his works of creation and preservation. Various influences combine to produce certain results; but back of these influences is He who spoke the world into being, and fixed its laws of production, increase, and compensation.

"Isn't it wonderful?" rejoined Harold. "So many creatures live so short a time it seems as though they might as well not live at all, but I suppose there would be vacant places without them. Grandsir and I were so shut up to ourselves, I used to think we had no place in the world."

"You have a place now."

"Yes, sir, and a good place too."

"You are number two in our company, and that is a good enough place for anybody," said Mason. "I begin to feel like tramping on again. The brook here is almost as large as it is at the mill; and if we are going to reach the spring that starts it,

by day after to-morrow, we must be moving."

"Slow and steady wins the race."

"That sounds just like Clarke. Fast and steady wins the race sooner, and that is what I believe in."

Having been over this ground before, Mr. Elliot knew where would be the best stopping-place for the night; and about the middle of the afternoon, he, with Harold, pushed forward, leaving the other members of the party to follow at their leisure.

"We must not attempt too much the first day," he said to his companion. "You and I are better used to this kind of life than the boys we have left behind us, but we will not make too hard work of it. You have had but few play-days since you came to Austenville."

"I never had any before I went there. I had no one to play with, so I was glad to work, to keep from being lonesome. Mr. Elliot, I want to go to my old home before we go back to Austenville. I want to see how it will look to me now."

"I wish to see it, too, and it is my intention to go there. When we have explored the brook, we will turn our faces northward towards your old home. There is a mystery connected with you that I am anxious to clear up. I have never talked with you much about it, but I have thought a great deal; and I feel sure that Mr. Dorsey was not related to you."

"I feel sure that he was not; but how came I to be with him?"

"I wish I could tell you. Do you know if he received any letters?"

"I went into the house once when he didn't expect me, and he was very angry because I asked him about a paper he had in his hand, and which I know now was a letter. He didn't allow me to ask him many questions."

"He was a strange man; and it seems as though he must have left some papers which would give a clue to his life."

"I have thought so sometimes, but I try not to think about it at all. I must have

belonged to somebody who didn't want me, and so I was sent off."

"You would not care now to see those who sent you off, Harold."

"I don't know, sir. Perhaps I am better than I should have been if I had stayed with them. At any rate, I have a good home now. Mr. and Mrs. Peavey are always doing something for me, because they love me; and that is what I need most of all. I wonder how anybody can go wrong who has one true, good friend?"

"I wonder, too, although I have sinned against great love. You have never tasted liquor of any kind, Harold?"

"No, sir. I promised grandsir I never would, and I never will. He said I had better die than do it. I have thought that perhaps somebody I belonged to was a drunkard. I don't think I always lived with grandsir. Since I have been into the great house it seems as though I had seen such rooms before, and I remember of crying myself to sleep a good many nights when

I was a little fellow. I can remember, too, when our house was further in the woods than it is now. The lumber was cut off up to grandsir's land, but he never sold a tree."

"It is very strange."

"Yes, sir; but God knows about it, and he will bring it out all right. I think grandsir wanted to tell me something when he was dying, but he couldn't speak."

"Well, Harold, if it is best for you to know about it you will; and if not, you can make a position for yourself."

"Yes, sir; and I can study books."

"Would you like to go to school?"

"I don't know, sir. I must learn what I can while I am working; and now that Mr. Stuart is going to hear my lessons I shall get on faster. Miss Greenleaf, too, has offered to help me; so I have only to do my part."

"You will save something from your wages, so that in a year or two you can afford to attend school, and perhaps you may be able to work your way through college."

"I can work," replied Harold; and with this response the conversation closed.

It was yet early when they reached the secluded spot where Mr. Elliot had spent many a night alone, and where he at once set about making preparations for the comfort of those under his care. Boughs of hemlock and spruce were interwoven to form an ample shelter; while other boughs were heaped into fragrant beds, inviting to repose. There was no house in sight, but Mr. Elliot knew where to obtain supplies for supper, and a rudely-constructed fireplace upon a large flat stone would serve for all purposes of cooking.

"Coffee, cold meat, bread and butter; doughnuts and cheese; a supper fit for a king, especially with such an appetite as I have," exclaimed Clarke Stuart. "I believe I was never so hungry in my life."

"Tired, too, are you not?"

"Yes, I am, and I guess my boots are tired too. At any rate, they are very heavy; too heavy for me to carry much

longer now, but I shall be all right when I have rested."

The doctor soon appeared, with Mason and Robert; each ready to appreciate the substantial fare, of which there was no lack.

By the waning light Mr. Elliot read a chapter from his pocket Testament; after which he commended his companions and himself to the watchful care of one who never slumbers nor sleeps. Blankets were unrolled; and with these for coverings, they found their beds luxurious and their sleep sweet.

The boys had promised each other to be first up in the morning, but it was not until they were called that they rubbed their eyes and wondered where they were.

"Why didn't you call us before?" asked Mason in a reproachful tone. "We have lost ever so much by sleeping so late. I wanted to see the sun rise from behind the hills, and hear the first twitter of the birds. And Clarke was up before me?"

"Yes, I have been fishing for your break-

fast. I caught enough for two, and I was glad to have you sleep. There is just time now for you boys to take a bath, while the doctor fries the last kettle of fish. So be off with you, and back again to breakfast."

This eaten, and a prayer offered, they began their march in jubilant spirits, making their way along the margin of the brook, which soon began to decrease in size. Mr. Elliot had a care for each and all; yet he was often silent and thoughtful.

The last time he had passed this way he felt himself pursued by a demon from which he hastened to escape. Struggling in his own strength to break the bands of appetite, he had well-nigh given over in the conflict. Now he was free; every pulse throbbing with new life. No longer a wandering vagabond; he had gained the esteem and confidence of those whose friendship he knew well how to prize.

It was a perfect day; less fatiguing to the pedestrians than that which had preceded it, and bringing to them a keener sense of iso-

lation from the ordinary walks of life. Before nightfall they reached the forest, in the recesses of which they were to find the object of their search; a tiny spring appearing from under a rock or tree, or a bubbling fountain sending up its waters from the oozy soil through which it had been filtered.

The ground was unfamiliar, even to Mr. Elliot, who only knew what he had learned in regard to it by inquiries at the different farm-houses which he had visited on his way. It was not known that any one had ever followed the brook to its very source. The owner of the forest considered it of but small value, although it contained some heavy timber, which, if differently situated, would find a ready market.

"According to the descriptions I have heard, it must be a rocky place, but I shall be much more sure about it when I have seen it for myself," said Mr. Elliot, as he discussed with his companions their plans for the future. "We must depend upon ourselves for food; carrying what we can,

and trusting to Harold's rifle for the rest. We may find some deep pools for fish, but we must be prepared for anything. So far, we have had a pleasure-trip."

"And we will make it a pleasure-trip all the way," responded Clarke Stuart. "It will do us all good to rough it and depend upon our own resources. I can carry bread enough in my haversack for Mason and myself, and the doctor says we may find ground-nuts for roasting."

"There is sure to be plenty of them," rejoined Harold Dorsey. "There is no danger of starving. I will engage to feed you all, if you will be satisfied with hunter's fare."

"We will be satisfied with anything, if there is only enough of it; and I think we ought to have roasted ground-nuts instead of bread," said Mason.

"Grandsir told me that the first settlers of the country depended a good deal upon ground-nuts, and men who live in the woods can eat them any time, when the ground isn't frozen."

"The early settlers of Canada and the United States would have been fortunate had this been their greatest hardship. People can support life on strange fare; but we are sure of a civilized supper, a civilized breakfast, and a day's supply of hard-bread. So, trusting in God, to whom we will pay our evening devotions, we may lie down and sleep securely. It is possible we shall camp here again; and for that reason I have built a more substantial shelter than if we were to tarry only for a night."

"Will it take all day to-morrow to reach the end of this journey?" asked Robert.

"I hope not; but we shall be obliged to go slowly and halt often. So far, our tramp has been a mere pleasant walk; now we must prepare for work; and the sooner we are resting, the better it will be for us."

The party slept even more soundly than on the previous night, awaking the next morning eager for the experience of the day. A hard day, too, it promised to be. Rougher walking than any they had before

encountered tried both muscle and mettle, yet no one complained. Clarke Stuart and Dick Fielding proved equal to all demands made upon them, and insisted upon performing their part of the labor.

Harold Dorsey was to them a most entertaining companion, in whom they were more and more interested. His grace of manner and modest self-reliance quite charmed them; while he, in turn, was conscious of appearing at his best. He was one with others, sharing the same pleasures, and contributing to the general comfort and happiness. His form seemed to dilate and his step grow firmer as he led the way over mossy stones and prostrate trees.

"We shall lose you if you hurry so," shouted Mason, almost breathless with exertion.

"You will find me again," he shouted back, as he was hidden from view by a ledge of rock, around the base of which flowed the little stream.

Not until noon did they catch another

glimpse of him; when they were notified of his presence by a curling smoke ascending from a small opening where he had lighted a fire. They had, however, heard the occasional report of a gun; so that they were not surprised to find an abundant dinner in waiting for them. Each carried rations of bread, but roasted ground-nuts were preferred, which, with squirrels done to a turn on hastily improvised spits, made a luxurious repast. Sheets of birch bark served as plates, and tin drinking-cups were filled from a spring near by.

Harold had not been idle, as was doubly proved when he told his companions that he had seen the source of the brook, more than a mile away.

"It starts from three springs on the side of the hill, all very near together, and all trickling down over some rocks, until they meet and form a little stream. I didn't expect to come to it so soon, and I couldn't stop to look around much; but there is time enough to examine it this afternoon, and

then climb to the top of the hill if you wish to."

"You must have walked fast, and worked fast, to accomplish so much," said the doctor, in reply to Harold's remarks. "I never knew anything of such cooking before, or of such abounding energy as you have."

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD HOME.

MR. ELLIOT made a hasty survey of the ground around the springs, and then submitted the question of climbing the hill, or returning to the camp they had left that morning. No one wished to go further, and they soon started on their return, reaching camp so late that they cared more for sleep than food.

The next morning a bountiful breakfast was in readiness, after eating which, Harold Dorsey expressed his intention to start that day for his old home.

"And leave us behind!" exclaimed Mason. "Let us go with you."

"I hope you will come, and I shall certainly expect you; but now that I am really going, I am impatient to be there. I shall

ride part of the distance. Mr. Elliot will tell you all about it."

"There are some places between here and there you will all enjoy seeing," responded the leader of the party. "I shall expect to hear from Austenville Saturday, and we will camp over Sunday, or find accommodations at some hotel. Monday, we will join Harold, and spend the week with him, if this arrangement pleases you."

No one could object, yet many regretful looks followed Harold as he left them, glad to be alone, that he might take counsel with himself. The thought of visiting the haunts of his early life moved him deeply. He wended his way through the villages and past the houses he remembered so well, when he saw them for the first time; but they wore a different aspect to him now, than when, friendless and homeless, he had gone on, scarce knowing whither he went. He saw some of the very men with whom he had then talked; yet to his keener vision, their faces were not the same.

He stopped for the night at a plain country tavern where he had bought a bowl of bread and milk, and the next night he stood by the rude dwelling he had called home. The cars brought him within five miles of the place, and he had walked this distance with hurried steps.

The house was tenantless. The grass was growing up to the very threshold of the door, which stood ajar. The fire-place, with the heavy iron dogs, was as he had left it; but the stove had been removed. A table and two chairs were all which remained of the scanty furniture; every article of which he could enumerate.

The loft, which had served as his sleeping-room, contained only a box filled with the treasures collected in his childhood, and which no one else had considered of any value. Here, his heart flooded with memories of events which seemed to him more like dreams than realities, he kneeled down and thanked God for the mercies which were crowning his life.

He would not have chosen that any one should know of his coming; but it was necessary that he should have food, which could be most easily obtained of a neighbor.

"Give your some supper, Harold! Of course I will and be glad to," exclaimed the woman to whom he made his request. "I watched you coming down the road, and I thought to myself, 'If that ain't Harold Dorsey, I don't know him,' 'though you've changed a good deal in your looks. We've wondered about you every day since you went away, and wished we could know how you fared."

"I have fared well," he answered. "I have a good home and good friends."

"You don't say you've found out who you belonged to, and gone to live with them."

"No, ma'am; but God raised up friends for me and sent me to them."

"Well, it's strange. But come in, and I'll get you some supper. You'll stay with us to-night. We shall be glad to have you, and as much longer as you stop 'round here."

"Thank you, but I intended to stay in the old house. I can make a bed of boughs."

"We'll see about that. Here comes husband and the boys."

All glad to see Harold Dorsey, and glad to hear of his good fortune. The best the house afforded was set before him, and his plans for the night were completely overruled.

"There has been a good deal of talk about Mr. Dorsey since he died," said Mr. Andrews. "People have conjectured strange things. I never knew what to make of his living alone as he did, and it seems stranger to me all the time. The family that moved in ransacked the house from garret to cellar, but I never heard as they found anything of any consequence. There might be such a thing as Mr. Dorsey's leaving a paper to explain matters for you."

"I don't think he would. It would not be like him to do it."

"Well, maybe not. You know about him better than I do. We always felt sorry for you, and wished we could help you, but there

never seemed any reason for interfering, that would justify us."

"I don't know how any one could have interfered between me and Mr. Dorsey, unless it was some one who had a claim on me. I had enough to eat, drink, and wear; and a shelter from the cold."

"But you ought to have gone to school."

"I wanted to go. Mr. Dorsey taught me a good deal, and now I study, every day, when I am at home. I found a home with two old people, Mr. and Mrs. Peavey, who took me in. I live with them, and do what I can for them."

"Do you work on a farm?"

For answer to this question, Harold described his position in Austenville, giving due credit to Mr. Elliot, who was remembered as a miserable drunkard.

"And you say he is a Christian man, trusted, and looked up to," remarked Mr. Andrews.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, that's the strangest of all. Why,

I've seen him when he was as pitiful a looking object as I ever saw anywhere, and he hadn't a place to lay his head. And he talks in meeting, and leads in prayer! I wish he'd give us a talk. We've been trying to have meetings in the school-house, this summer, and sometimes we get quite a company together."

"I expect Mr. Elliot here Monday, with four others; two young men, and two boys. We are all going to stay until Saturday, and perhaps longer. We want to explore the woods together."

"I wish they were coming to-morrow, but perhaps you can help us Sunday. How is it with you? Are you a Christian?"

"I hope I am. I am trying to live according to the Bible."

"That is right. You couldn't tell me any better news. I neglected religion too long, but I am trying to make up for it as well as I can."

"Better tell Harold what set you to thinking about it," now said Mrs. Andrews.

"I will, for he ought to know," was replied. "Do you remember telling our Ben that you had promised Mr. Dorsey never to look in a Bible till you was sixteen years old?"

"Yes, sir; I do remember telling him."

"Well, he came home and told us of it, and he said he wouldn't have made such a promise to anybody. He would read the Bible when he wanted to; and after that, he used to be looking into the big Bible pretty often. Finally he read it aloud, Sundays, and by and by, he started up to go to meeting. He walked six miles and back again, for the sake of hearing a sermon; and he wouldn't have done that if he hadn't cared a good deal about it."

"I would have walked twice that distance, if I could have gone, when I lived here with Mr. Dorsey. I used to wonder and wonder what a meeting was like. But I interrupted you."

"No matter if you did. Good news can wait. Ben is a Christian, and he is away at

work this summer, to earn money, so he can go to school next winter. He aint satisfied not to know any more than he can learn right 'round here. We expect him to-morrow night, to stay over Sunday, and help about the meeting. We shall expect to hear from you too. He says it was what you told him that made him want to read the Bible; and his reading it made his mother and me read it, and that, with God's grace, made us try to live Christian lives. I hope all the boys will be brought in, and I expect they will. Wife and I are thinking of joining the church."

"And all this good came of my not being allowed to read the Bible."

"It seems as though it did, Harold."

"Then I could afford to wait; but that doesn't make it any better for Mr. Dorsey."

"You must leave that with God."

"Yes, sir; I do; and I leave all the mystery about myself with him too."

"That is best, 'though it is right for you to want to know," replied Mr. Andrews.

The boys waited for an opportunity to talk with Harold Dorsey, which, however, did not come until the next morning, when they sat together in the old stoop and watched the fast falling rain.

"Wasn't you glad to get away from Mr. Dorsey?" asked one.

"I don't think I was really glad," replied Harold. "I didn't know what was before me, and he was all I had; but I am better off now than I should have been if he had lived."

"The house and land belong to you. He held it in trust for you. Didn't father tell you?"

"No."

"Perhaps he thought you knew about it. It aint a very valuable piece of property, but it is better than nothing."

"How came it to be mine? Who cared enough for me to give me even so much?"

It was easy to ask himself these questions, to which his wildest conjectures could frame no replies.

Before noon the sky cleared, and he went again to the house which was to him the one connecting link with the past. He kindled a fire on the hearth; and as the long tongues of flame leaped up the chimney, he saw them as he had seen them in his childhood, when he sat, silent and thoughtful, opposite the man who had claimed from him unquestioning obedience.

Mrs. Andrews came over with two of her sons, and before night-fall, floors, ceiling, and windows were thoroughly cleaned.

"It begins to look as though somebody could live here," remarked the woman, surveying the result of their afternoon's work. "It is a rough place, but it is better than a good many have; and I know a family that would be glad to come in here and keep things from going to pieces. They live now in a shanty that answers for summer, but as soon as it comes cold weather they can't stay there. It is Beloy's family. You used to see Beloy, the chopper, didn't you."

"I used to see him in the woods some-

times, but Mr. Dorsey told me not to speak to him. Isn't he a bad man?"

"He was bad when he drank liquor; but he has given that up, and is trying to do as well as he can. He comes to the meetings in the school-house, with his wife and children, 'though they have hardly decent clothes to wear. If you see him to-morrow, I hope you will talk with him. It will do him good. He remembers you."

No one in the vicinity who had ever seen Harold Dorsey, or heard his name, but remembered him; and the expectation that he would be present brought a larger number than usual to the little school-house on Sunday morning.

The meeting was opened with prayer by Mr. Andrews; after which his son read a chapter from the Bible, with explanatory notes; adding a few words of his own, expressing his trust in God, and his determination to continue in the way he had chosen.

The silence which followed was broken by a strong, sweet voice commencing a familiar

hymn; and to the surprise of all present, other voices joined in this service of song. They had not thought it possible to have singing; but there are few in this favored land of ours who have not, at some time in their lives, learned the melody of psalm or hymn.

"That was good," said Jaques Beloy, springing to his feet. "I didn't suppose I could sing; but I did, and I feel better for it. I want you all to pray for me, and I want somebody to pray for me right here, that I may keep sober, and have my sins washed away in the Saviour's blood."

The same voice which had led the singing was heard in prayer, touching hearts all unused to feelings of contrition. Every eye was then turned to Harold Dorsey, who arose and related something of his experience during the time he had been absent from these scenes. He told of his lonely, wearisome journey; of his call at Mr. Peavey's, and the instruction he had there received in regard to keeping the Sabbath. Without

reflecting unkindly upon Mr. Dorsey, he referred to the fact that he had received no religious instruction during his boyhood. At first he spoke with some hesitation, but as he continued, words came apace. He described the meetings in Austenville, and closed with an appeal to all present to come out on the Lord's side.

"Now sing another hymn. Sing another hymn," exclaimed Beloy, the chopper, and a hymn was sung with a will.

Then all were invited to remain at Sunday-school, and as there was a class of boys who had come for the first time, and who had no teacher, Harold was persuaded to take them in charge. To say that he interested them would be giving both him and them small credit. They listened admiringly, while new aspirations awoke within them, and new resolves inspired them.

"Will you be here next Sunday?" asked the most untutored boy of all when school was dismissed.

"I cannot tell; but if I am here I shall

want to see every one of you," was replied.

"You will; and if you aint here perhaps we better come. We shall learn something, and we need to bad enough. Ben Andrews wants us to come, and he knows sights more than the rest of us. We promised him we'd come to the sermon at five o'clock."

The time between Sunday-school and the preaching service was spent by Harold Dorsey with this same Ben Andrews, who, although several years his senior, had seen less of the world than himself.

"It is going to be up-hill work for me, but I must have an education," said the young man. "Studying the Bible gave me a hint of what there is to be learned from other books, and I shall never be satisfied till I am fairly started in school."

"You will not be satisfied then. There will always be something to read and something to study; but, if you are a Christian, you will be willing to do the most you can, and then wait for the rest. I always wanted

to know about a great many things; but the more I know the more I want to. The world grows larger. But there is one comfort for us all: anybody can study the Bible, and there is something of everything in that. Miss Austen says it is like a mine. The more you study it, the more it gives you."

"I know that, but I need more help than you do. You have gained more in a year and a half than I could in twice that time."

The arrival of Harold Dorsey, and the fact that he had taken part in the school-house meeting, induced many to come at five o'clock who had not been present in the morning. They wished to see the visitor, and observe for themselves the changes in his appearance. The clergyman, who had in vain sought to win Mr. Dorsey's confidence, was particularly interested in one so long shut in from outside influences. A short conversation served to increase this interest, and with the promise to call upon the young man "at home," Mr. Colburn left him.

Mr. and Mrs. Andrews insisted upon his stopping with them until his friends arrived; but early Monday morning he established himself in the shady old kitchen, and began preparations for the comfort of his expected guests. By noon the cupboard contained some plain crockery, borrowed for the occasion, while on the shelves of the cool pantry were loaves of bread and pats of butter, milk, cheese, and doughnuts. As for meat, it was to be obtained from the woods, or neighboring sheep-folds and poultry-yards.

Living under a roof, even here, would not be exactly "camping out," but Harold judged rightly that his plans would meet with approbation. There were seats and beds for all, and nothing could have been more delightful to the travellers than the reception tendered them.

"I didn't know how much I cared about you till after you were gone," said Mason. "It seemed as though half our company had left us. Mr. Elliot has been just splendid; but he couldn't fill his place and yours too."

"We couldn't think of going any further without you," added Clarke; Dick Fielding and Robert Bumstead endorsing this assertion.

"I am glad to be missed," was Harold's modest reply. "But I wanted to come here alone, and I have gained a great deal by it. I found friends where I should not have looked for them. Everybody is good to me."

"Why shouldn't people be good to you? Aunt Margaret says we generally get as we give, and I have found that true."

"As a rule that holds good the world over, although there are some exceptions," responded Mr. Elliot. "But, Harold, you have done wonders here. You have made the old house far pleasanter than I ever saw it before. It is really inviting. We shall almost forget that we are roughing it."

"I am glad you like it. Mrs. Andrews and the boys helped me. She filled the pantry shelves, and we shall have fried chicken from her kitchen in the morning. After that you can decide for yourselves

what you would like. Now that I know the house belongs to me, I begin to feel as though I was entertaining company for myself. You are the first company I ever had, and you are very welcome."

In response to this Clarke Stuart proposed "three cheers for our host," which were given with a hearty good will.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHOPPER.

PEOPLE were curious in regard to the inmates of the Dorsey house, and the neighborhood was rife with gossip, much of which had no foundation in fact. New theories were broached, to account for the building of the house; while Harold's presence revived the interest which had been felt in him and the man he had called "grandsir."

Many questions were asked Mr. Elliot, and he was often urged to express an opinion, which he invariably declined to do. He applied to the proper authorities to secure the legal rights of his young friend, and devoted a half-day to making a thorough search for any papers which might possibly have been left by Mr. Dorsey. With this his efforts were at an end. Whatever secret

had been in the old man's keeping was buried in a lonely grave.

"I am satisfied that it should be so," said Harold. "I am better satisfied than ever before. This visit has given me a feeling of rest and contentment I should not have had without it. I have nothing to do now but to enjoy all I can, and help others to enjoy every minute of the time."

"That is all; and you can stay over another Sabbath, even if I return to Austenville this week. I am waiting to hear from there before deciding when I shall go. If Mrs. Andrews can cook for you all, and you choose to spend another week here, you cannot do better than to stay. There is plenty of game in the woods, twenty miles away, and with the experience they have had the young men and boys are able to take care of themselves."

"Yes, sir; but I am thinking of Mr. and Mrs. Peavey. They will miss me."

"Of course they will, but they will be glad to have you enjoy a rest."

In doors, or out, as they pleased; no life could have suited them better. Sunbrowned and roughly dressed, they might have been mistaken for a party of back-woodsmen, yet their gentlemanly manners commended them to the favor of all who saw them. Under Mr. Elliot's care they had grown strong and vigorous; able to accomplish far more than they would have presumed to attempt when they left Austenville.

Mason had not thought of headache. He was "all right," every way, ready for anything which might offer. He had made friends with Jaques Beloy, who found him in the woods and told him where to fish for trout. Robert was his constant companion; alert and watchful, yet quiet and undemonstrative. Dick Fielding studied the structure of plants and flowers he had never seen before, and learning from Harold the medicinal properties of some used by a man claiming to be an Indian doctor.

"You don't propose to practise in his line?" said Clarke Stuart, after listening

to a recital of assertions made by this doctor.

"I presume not, but I should like to know what *he* knows," was replied. "Such knowledge could not come amiss."

"Knowing what *he* knows, you would possess a large fund of knowledge not set down in books," remarked Mr. Elliot. "I have met the man, and it seemed to me he could name every plant and vine that grows. Of course he knows nothing of botany as a science, but one who wished to make a complete list of the flora of this part of the State could not do better than to engage his services. He may be a quack in medicine; but under favorable conditions he would have made a first-class botanist. I was sometimes surprised to see how almost lovingly he would bend over a flower, before disturbing the root, which he wished for his medicine-bag."

"I think everybody knows something that's worth knowing, Mr. Elliot; and perhaps we shouldn't know any more than a real igno-

rant man, if we hadn't had any better chance," said Robert, blushing at his own boldness in thus expressing an opinion.

"I presume we should not," was replied. "But few men and women can rise above circumstances, and with resolute will adopt a course of action requiring the very best efforts of which they are capable. It is easier to drift with the current, than to take up the oars and row as for one's life. There are thousands of lives running to waste, for the want of energy and application."

"Do you suppose the man has ever lived who did all of which he was capable?" asked Dick Fielding.

"I presume not, yet some have accomplished what seemed to others impossible. I can think now what I might have done, and wish vainly that I could live over the last twenty years. I might have been somebody, while I am now only a poor man, doing what I can to make amends for misspent time."

With these words Mr. Elliot walked away,

and was seen no more until the horn sounded to call truants home.

"I am beginning to feel that I have been a very useless member of society," said Clarke Stuart when left alone with his cousin. "Everybody connected with Austenville seems to be having what Mason calls a tiptop time, and yet everybody is hard at work, and planning to do more in the future. Aunt Margaret never hurries, but she is always busy; and as for Edward, he has grown almost out of my knowledge. Between you and me, I think he is a splendid fellow."

"All that, and more. Until I saw him in Austenville, I never realized how grand a thing religion is. He lives it every day, and not a man or woman in the place but would trust him with uncounted treasures. Every bale of goods he sells will be a voucher for his honesty. He has set us an example we shall do well to follow."

"You are right, Dick. He has, but I have never thought much about religion."

I have thought a great deal about it, and

when Mason asked me if I was a Christian, I wished I could answer him more confidently in the affirmative. I think our excursion has been pleasanter than it would have been without the morning and evening prayer; and, Clarke, it is time for us both to consider seriously our relations to God."

"I am ready to acknowledge that; but the truth is, it seems to me religion would fit me awkwardly. I have never been very thoroughly in earnest about anything, unless it was a day's pleasure. Our loss of property startled me from a sense of ease and security, and the last fortnight has deepened the convictions of duty which have been growing upon me since then. I have wished that I could identify myself with the mill; but Edward says there is no place for me, and I am not sure that I should be satisfied to live so far out of the world. The winters must be very dull."

"Unless one's time is pleasantly occupied. Think of living here, without seeing the faces of a dozen different people in as

many months. To Harold, Austenville is a large place."

"He will make his mark in a larger place. He is growing fast, now that he comes to the front as our host, and we are faring like kings. I don't wonder Mrs. Andrews is astonished at our capacities for eating."

These days in the forest were days to be remembered. The sky was bluer than elsewhere; the clouds took on more picturesque forms; while in harmony with beauty appealing to the sight was the music of the wind sweeping through stately pines.

Harold recounted his experience in trapping; pointing to the upturned stumps, beneath which he had found many a burrow, whose occupants were lured to their death. He took them to the stream, on the banks of which he had caught minks, whose dark, soft fur Mr. Dorsey had sold for a high price.

Once he had killed a moose, which was considered a great feat by the man who was with him, but Mr. Dorsey did not even say that he had done well.

"One winter, there were several moose-yards, not very far north of us," he remarked.

"What do you mean by yards?" asked Mason.

"I mean the winter-quarters of the moose, among the hard-wood trees, where they can feed. Their upper lip is so long and strong, they can pull down the branches of trees with it, and then hold them with their fore-legs while they strip off the twigs and bark. They tread down the snow very hard doing this, and when they have taken all they can reach, they tread down new snow, and feed on new trees."

"How many are there in a yard?"

"Generally, a male and female and two fawns. The hunters know where to look for them, but as the woods are cut down, their numbers grow less. When they go to a stream to drink, they take the same path day after day, and sometimes they are caught in a slip-noose, fastened to a young tree bent down in their path. An old hunter can tell the minute he sees it, if a tree has been cropped by a moose. Life in the woods

makes one quick to observe everything around him."

"You are quick to observe."

"Not so quick as many. I used to think I learned slowly, although I had nothing else to do."

"The acuteness of the senses under sharp training is astonishing," said Dick Fielding. "I have read of instances which seemed incredible, yet I presume they may have been true."

"I should not doubt anything in that line. What would be impossible to us is easy to one who has been trained to close watchfulness. Necessity drives people to strange shifts, and Mr. Dorsey used to say that real wants are very few."

"I suppose that means life can be sustained on very little; but such living dwarfs the intellect and the heart. A comfortable house, with pleasant surroundings, and plenty of good substantial food, without undue anxiety in regard to it, is essential to living at one's best."

"Then you ought to be doing your best right along," said Mason, in response to his brother. "We have enough to eat, and I don't know of anybody who is anxious about it, unless Mrs. Andrews and Harold are. I am growing just as fast as I can, and I guess we all are."

These remarks called forth shouts of laughter. It was so easy to laugh when all were happy; so easy to smile when all were at ease. Yet these pleasure-seekers were sometimes confronted with stern realities. They made a visit to the shanty where Jaques Beloy had lived with his family for three years, through summer's heat and winter's cold. There, two babies had been born, and there they would have remained, had not some new thoughts found place in the father's heart.

"Why didn't you ever tell me about God and the Bible?" he asked Harold, one day, as he leaned upon his axe and looked up into the young man's face.

"Because I didn't know. I *couldn't* tell you," was replied.

"I've seen plenty that *did* know. Why didn't they tell a poor fellow like me, that was just doing bad all the time, and not knowing any better. It makes heaps of difference to me and my poor wife, that I've dragged 'round all these years, and not helping her to know what she ought to. I haint seen a man in the woods since I turned 'round, but what I've told of the good way; and would you believe it, Harold! some of them say they've heard it all before and don't care. It's strange how they don't care. I couldn't help it. I tell my wife and children; and when we talk about it we feel like rich folks."

"It makes people rich; because, no matter how we are here, we shall be rich in heaven."

"But we are rich here," urged the chopper. "Aint a man rich when he has enough for himself and them that belong to him? I can earn big wages every day, and spend it for what we need; and won't that make me rich? My wife is tidy and as good managing as any; and she's that happy she don't get tired."

"You will never drink liquor again, Mr. Beloy."

"Will I? Sooner will I die. Don't you fear for me. Mr. Elliot's been talking to me about the right way. He has done as bad as I, and worse, because he knew better."

"He is doing well now, Mr. Beloy. Everybody in Austenville respects him."

"And you, too, he says. You was always a good boy, and I'm glad of your good luck. We're waiting now for you to find out how you come to be set down here in the woods with Mr. Dorsey. They say the house is yours. It aint much to have, but it's a roof over your head when you want to live under it."

"It would be more comfortable for you than the house you are living in now. I should not ask you much rent, and you could occupy it as long as you please."

"How much would you ask?" inquired the chopper, with a forethought quite unusual to him.

It did not require long to settle this matter,

and when both declared themselves satisfied, Harold went his way, leaving a man who could hardly realize what it would be to live in a "real house."

"We have not given him the credit he deserves," remarked Mr. Elliot when this conversation had been reported. "He was always called a bad man, but he knew nothing beyond providing for the immediate physical wants of himself and family, and gratifying his appetite for strong drink. There is not much about your house to be injured, and it may be that he will improve it. A sober man must do something in the long winter evenings. He cannot sit idle for hours at a time. He must be employed in some way. I find that I am getting tired of so much leisure. I must go back to Austenville and go to work. Everything is going on well there, and I could be spared until next week, but it is best that I should go. I am anxious to see Jessie, and I have decided to be at home Saturday night; but I advise you to stay longer."

All regretted his leaving, yet no one wished to return with him. They were anxious to attend the school-house meeting, which Mrs. Andrews was sure would be large; because "everybody expected to hear good singing, and there's nothing like that for keeping folks interested that don't care for the talking or praying."

"Can all five of you sing?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am, we can all sing first rate, and you shall hear from us to-morrow," answered Mason.

His companions were ready to redeem this promise, and the day was in accord with its duties.

"I would not have missed this morning for all the rest of our trip," said Clarke Stuart. "I have been feeling that we are shut out from the world and shut in to heaven. Harold, how long did it take you to make up your mind to be a Christian?

"Do you mean how long was it after I knew about God, before I was ready to love and serve him?"

"Perhaps that is what I mean."

"I loved Him the minute I knew He loved me. I don't see how anybody can help loving Him."

"But being a Christian is more than loving. It is living according to certain rules, and giving up your own will to the will of God."

"Mr. Elliot says it is loving God, and living in real earnest — honest and true in everything."

Thus closed the conversation upon this subject; but in the meeting, that day, there was no more devout worshipper than Clarke Stuart. The simple service was more impressive than any he had before witnessed; while, with others, he paid tearful tribute to the earnest words spoken by his young brother.

The singing charmed all who heard it. Even the singers themselves were touched by the melody of their own voices. The entire congregation remained to Sunday-school, and after an hour's study of the Bible, a request was made for more singing.

The people were lifted out of the ordinary routine of their lives. For the time, they forgot care and weariness, and were vaguely conscious of a nature whose needs were here recognized. Some had not attended church for years. Living remote from any place of public worship, they had allowed the sabbaths to come and go unnoticed until, as they frankly acknowledged, they were no better than heathen.

"I used to feel bad about never going to meeting, but I couldn't help it," said one woman. "We didn't keep any horse, and I couldn't walk five miles and back Sundays, after I'd worked hard all the week. It's no way to bring up a family, and I always knew it. But my husband didn't see things as I did, and so we've gone on till this summer, when Ben Andrews started up to have a meeting here in the schqol-house. I made up my mind then that we should all come; and we have, and it's rested me all through."

"The meetings have done a sight of good," responded a neighbor. "We must keep

them up right along too. We can't expect another like what we've had to-day. The young folks have learned some of the hymns, and they'll do the best they can with the singing. Then there's Beloy and his wife, that have got as sweet voices as you will hear anywhere. The meetings give me something to think of all the week. I wish Harold Dorsey was going to stay with us, and then we should be sure of a meeting."

Harold did not wish to remain, yet it was with positive regret that he closed the door of his house and hastened to join his companions, who had thoughtfully left him alone the last half hour he was to spend there. A wagon was to take their baggage by the road, while they walked through the woods.

Jaques Beloy, who had watched for their coming, asked that he might shake hands with each of them; wished them a prosperous journey and a glad coming back next year; then watched them until they were lost to sight among the trees, when he said to himself:

"I'll be nearer like them next year. I've got God and the Bible, and I can sing; that's one side. I can work and earn money, and not spend it for drink; that's the other side."

CHAPTER XIII.

MISS SPERRY'S COUSIN.

MR. BUMSTEAD met them at the station, declaring, however, that they needed a voucher for their identity.

"Robert, lad, is it really you?" he asked in a choked voice, as the boy sprang to his arms. "You have grown that much, and your cheeks are so tanned, the mother 'll be looking twice before she takes you in. We have missed you all," he added, turning to the others. "The weeks have seemed longer to us than they have to you."

"They have been the shortest weeks of my life," responded Clarke Stuart.

"Shortest to me too," said each and all.

"And you have been to Harold's old home."

"Yes, sir, and he entertained us royally.

Ordinary life will seem tame to us now. We have been living on the heights."

"We have been living not very low down," responded Mr. Bumstead. "We knew you were having the best of times; and when Mr. Elliot came, he said we needn't think strange if you stayed a week longer."

"Harold thought best to come, so we hurried on with him as fast as steam would bring us."

"Then you had enough of walking."

"Enough for once."

"Well, it's not best to make the play-times too long. There was no danger of that with me when I was a boy; but nowadays it is different. See what a promise there is of a rich harvest, 'though the best harvest I know of is coming from our looms. There's not an idle bit of machinery in the mill, week in and week out."

Just then they had reached descending ground, and the speed of the horses drew attention from other subjects of conversation.

Mason was silent; thinking of those he

was so soon to meet, and the well-filled pages of his note-book, as they would be read the coming winter, when he had transferred to it the scrappy notes which had been jotted down from time to time, and which he would fill out at his leisure. He had learned much; a bit here and a bit there, with many suggestions for future inquiry. New scenes had succeeded each other so rapidly, it would be only after many weeks, and perhaps months, that he would recall some pleasant incidents. He was perfectly well; so that he could "think as long and hard" as he pleased; and he must make up for lost time as fast as possible. He could take two days' lessons in one, and —

But he was among familiar places: the chimney of the great house in sight, and he almost home. He must postpone the further consideration of his plans until a more convenient season.

A confusion of tongues followed the arrival of the travellers. All were so glad to see them and know that no evil had befallen them.

"Where is Harold Dorsey?" asked Miss Austen presently.

"He took his valise and started for Mr. Peavey's without stopping to speak to any one," replied Mr. Bumstead.

"I intended he should take tea with us, but the old people will rejoice at the sight of his face, and we have so many, we ought to be willing to spare them one."

"Ten of us, Aunt Margaret, besides mother."

"And not too many, even if there were twice ten."

Mason ran down the walk to meet his brother Edward, to whom he confided the fact that Clarke was getting to be a first-rate fellow.

"You will see it for yourself," he said decidedly, and the elder brother was quick to note the subtile change which might have escaped the observation of one less interested.

As usual, his sisters, Hester and Lilla, claimed his attention; but his cousins clung to their brother.

"You have been the only one to look out

for six girls," exclaimed Mason when they gathered on the piazza after tea.

"There were eight girls one day," responded Hester. "Jessie and Norah spent a whole day here, and then all of us except Madge and Nellie, spent a day with each of them, and we had a splendid time. They can do the loveliest things of any girls I ever went to visit."

"You had so good a time I don't suppose you missed us."

"Yes we did. We always miss *you* when you are gone, and we missed Dick and Clarke too. But we knew we couldn't have you, so we made the most of Edward; and he is as good, as good, *almost* as good as father was."

No higher praise than this could be given; yet the reference to one so dearly loved threw a shade of sadness over the entire company, and all were relieved when Mr. Elliot appeared in sight. Clarke and Mason hurried to speak with him, followed soon by Dick Fielding. Greetings were exchanged, ques-

tions asked and answered, and comments made upon various events.

Jessie received a call as she waited for her father, and later, Mason presented himself at the door of Mrs. Rady's kitchen.

"I saw you when you came," said Norah. "Haven't you had the grandest time, and didn't you want to stay longer?"

"I had a grand time, but I was glad to come back," he replied.

"You have lived out of doors, and your face is almost as black as mine, only it is different. But don't you think — I have been to Miss Austen's while you were gone, and your sisters and cousins have been here."

"And you like them, don't you?"

"Yes, I do. I couldn't help it if I wanted to."

"They like you too."

"I don't see how they can."

"I don't see how they could help it. But your mother and grandmother are coming, and they will want their supper. Good-by."

Mason Stuart bowed to the two women as

respectfully and courteously as if they had been "ladies," and then passed on; having brightened the whole evening for them.

Meanwhile, Harold Dorsey was at home in the little brown cottage, where a dainty supper was spread for him, and where two old people were made happy by his presence.

"We didn't know how much we depended on you, till you went away," said Mrs. Peavey; adding quickly: "I don't mean for work, but for company. It seemed as though we had moved away from neighbors, so we couldn't hear what was going on. Miss Greenleaf came over one morning, and we persuaded her to stay all day, we were so lonesome."

"That was a good day," rejoined Mr. Peavey. "She is a nice, sensible girl, and after she had set down to the table and eat with us once, she seemed like our own folks. She told us how she used to work when her mother was alive. She haint had a very easy time."

"But she has learned a good deal, and that makes up for hard work."

"Yes, Harold, I suppose it does with such as you are, and I am glad you can learn. Miss Greenleaf says you are a good scholar, as far as you have studied."

"I mean to be thorough. Mr. Dorsey taught me that. If I didn't do anything well the first time, I was obliged to do it over."

"You don't say grandsir now as you used to," remarked Mr. Peavey.

"No, sir, I don't feel like saying it. I am surer than I ever was before that he was not my grandfather, and I prefer to call him Mr. Dorsey. I don't know anything about it for a fact, but I believe he was not related to me."

Harold now told his friends in regard to the house he could call his own; after which he heard an account of the growing crops, the early ripening fruit, and the broods of chickens which were Mrs. Peavey's care and pride; in all of which he was interested.

"We shall have enough and to spare, this year, and I wouldn't believe I could step 'round so spry, if I hadn't seen myself do it. I thought I had settled down for life; but

now, every once in a while, I find myself planning ahead, the same as if I was a young man. Wife has had first-rate luck, too, with her butter, and Gatchell has engaged all she can make this summer. I guess we belong with Austenville folks."

"They are good folks to belong with," replied Harold smilingly.

"That's what they are. Mother hain't told you the best of all. We've been to two Sunday evening meetings. The first time, Mr. Stuart came over after us, and we rode, but the last time we walked. We didn't know but we should be too tired to go all the way, but the thought of the meeting kept us up; and now we shan't miss another as long as the good weather lasts. We followed your path, and we liked it better than riding."

Neither said anything of the part Mr. Peavey had taken in these meetings; cheering and encouraging all who heard his earnest words; but the next day, Mr. Gray told Harold Dorsey that the old man talked "like a messenger sent from God."

"He didn't read anything out of the Bible, but he just talked it, verse after verse, until I wondered if he knew it all. He said he was so thankful for such a meeting, he couldn't tell half he felt about it. You were a lucky fellow to get into quarters with him; and everybody says his wife is as good as he is."

"She is, and if she was in the habit of talking in meeting she would talk as well as he can."

"We had some to hear Mr. Peavey, last Sunday, that never came to the meeting before. Mrs. Borine was there with Norah, and there wasn't one in the hall paid closer attention than she did. Mr. Gatchell was there, too, and he hain't been many times. Jane Sperry came over with her cousin, Esther Wetherell; and my wife and children were there. Miss Austen never did anything better than starting the mill meetings."

These meetings were talked of in remote parts of the town, and in out of the way houses, whose inmates seldom went beyond their immediate neighborhood. Miss Sperry

and her cousin walked the long distance from their home, that they might be present to hear for themselves. Miss Austen and Miss Greenleaf both welcomed them; the former proposing to provide a way for their return, which kindness was politely declined.

"We want to feel that we can come again, without being beholden to anybody," said Miss Sperry. "We want to walk both ways, and we've got so much good, I don't expect we shall feel tired."

So with kind words and smiles of recognition from people they did not often meet, they turned their faces homeward, feeling that they were actual members of the community.

The visit they had received from Miss Greenleaf and Jessie Elliot had been a marked event, supplementing, as it did, Miss Austen's call, and in some ways more helpful. Alice Greenleaf could sympathize with Esther Wetherell in her desire for an education, telling her of obstacles surmounted greater than any obstructing her path.

"I've made up my mind, and I may as

well speak it first as last," said Miss Sperry, after they had reached home Sabbath evening. "I've been thinking it over a good deal, and I'm sure that the best you can do is to go to work in the mill and earn what you can. If it wasn't that I've got this house, I'd go with you; but if I went away from under the old roof I shouldn't know how to behave, so I better stay. You can come home Saturday nights, and stay with me till Sunday night. That will hearten me up a little; and what with my garden and my knitting, the weeks won't seem very long. Any way, I am ready to try it, and Austenville is the place for you."

"I think it is," replied Esther. "I should like to go there, but I don't know as there is room for me."

"You never *will* know unless you try to find out. May be, if you go there, you'll get, sometime, so you can keep school, the same as Miss Greenleaf does. She says you won't need to learn a great deal more before you can begin with small scholars, and you

won't have to build a house to live in as you go along. We can fix up some, with little shelves, and things that grow out-doors; and who knows but what we can make our house real pleasant. I'm going to live in the south room this winter, where the sun shines and I can see out. It ain't the way to shut up the best you have, and not get any good of it. I've made up my mind to that."

"I'm glad you have, and — and I can't tell you how thankful I am for all you've done for me; but if I live, I will try to show you. When had I better go over to Austenville, to see if I can get work there?"

"Go to-morrow morning, as soon as the dew is off. There ain't any use waiting, and dreading it. Just go to the great house and ask for Miss Austen, and when you see her, do your errand. I don't know as she is the one folks go to for work, but I shouldn't ask anybody else."

Monday morning, Esther Wetherell's services were desired nearer home; so it was not until Tuesday that she went to Austenville;

and while Mr. Gray and Harold were talking together, they saw her going up the walk to the great house.

"There is Miss Sperry's cousin," remarked the man. "She is a smart girl too. She hasn't had much chance, but she was the best scholar in school as long as she went, and she went till she learned out. I guess she has got some new notions in her head."

Miss Austen met her kindly, listened to her request, and went at once to Mr. Bumstead, to ask if a place could be found for her.

"There is no place for one like her," he replied. "I saw her Sunday night, and she ought to have the nicest work there is in the mill. There will be a vacancy in the fall; but just now I don't see what we can do for her in a way she would like."

"She may not be particular."

"But there is a fitness of things, Miss Austen, and it's well to hold to it."

"Look at Mr. Elliot. He fits himself to his work, whatever it is, and loses nothing by it."

"True for you, but it is a girl we are talking about. However, Miss Austen, I am not the one to oppose you. I will show her what work we have that we are wanting help for, and she can do as she likes about beginning on it. She shall have the first chance at something better, whether she comes now or not."

The work was far from inviting, and the din of the machinery quite confused her; but Esther Wetherell had started out resolutely that morning, and she was not to be easily discouraged. Her wages would be small at first, increasing as she gained in skill; and, at the lowest, more than sufficient to pay her board. She was ready to accept the place at once, and when she found that she could obtain board in the same house with Miss Greenleaf, she counted herself fortunate indeed.

"A dirty place, where you can't wear only the darkest calico dresses?" said Miss Sperry in response to her cousin's report of the morning's experience. "Well, dirt won't hurt you, and you must expect to creep before you can walk. If you've made up your

mind to climb the hill of Science that I've heard about, it won't do for you to be particular about what shoes you wear. We shall have to be pretty busy to-day and to-morrow; but take us both together, I guess we can get you ready for Thursday."

Another was brought under influences which were rapidly developing both the material and mental resources of Austenville, and bringing it into favorable notice. No longer an experiment; even Mr. Fielding was forced to acknowledge that Margaret Austen had a wise head for business, notwithstanding her "visionary schemes."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BRIGHT SIDE.

VACATION was ended. The visitors at the great house had bidden a reluctant good-by to the people and places which had given them so much of pleasure, and a strange stillness pervaded the rooms they had occupied.

Clarke Stuart and Dick Fielding returned to their homes with deeper convictions of the responsibility of living, and a truer estimate of their own abilities. For them there would be no more idling; no more waiting on the threshold of manhood while others made the way smooth before them.

Mason, too, had learned new lessons he was eager to put in practice. He was ready to settle down to good hard work; having gained more than he had lost, as he assured

his friend, Rufus Brown, who had been hard at work during his absence.

"And I have prospered in everything I have undertaken," was responded. "It seems almost too much for me."

"I don't know why it should. There is just as much for you as for anybody. If you plant corn and take good care of it, you will get a good crop, unless the season is worse than usual. If you study, you will learn; if you dawdle over your books, you will be ignorant. It is all as plain as can be. What we sow, that we shall reap."

"I know it, Mason; but I am reaping what I did *not* sow, and I don't know why I should. Your cousin Dick helped me a good deal after you went away. He heard my lessons sometimes, and explained what I didn't understand. One day, too, when mother was sick, he brought her some medicine, such as your grandfather used to give her, and she got well in almost no time."

"I am glad of that. Dick is going to be the doctor of the family, and Aunt Margaret

has given him leave to use grandfather's books when he pleases. You are going to school next winter, aren't you?"

"I calculate to. Mother thinks we shall have enough to live on, and I had rather eat nothing but corn-bread than not to go to school. I am starving for school."

"You don't look starving for anything."

"The starving is inside of my head. It is pretty empty, and I must begin to fill up."

Mr. Fielding having given a reluctant consent that his son should study for the profession of medicine, and ample means having been placed at the young man's disposal, there was no reason for delay in entering upon the preparatory course. He was to fit for college as soon as might be; while his cousin, Clarke Stuart, engaged as clerk in the commission house which sold the Austenville cloth.

As the evenings lengthened, there were the usual gatherings in Mrs. Stuart's sitting-room, when notes were compared and questions submitted; but there were vacant

places in the circle. True, there were sometimes letters read from the absent ones, yet these were poor substitutes for their presence.

"Margaret has almost broken up our families," said Mrs. Fielding, one day when visiting her sister. "Two of your boys are gone, and all the one I have is entirely under her management. Margaret was always different from other women; but this last plan of hers eclipses all which have gone before it."

"I think it does," replied Mrs. Stuart. "Margaret is a remarkable woman. Father always trusted her judgment after she was old enough to understand the relation of things to each other. She has not broken up my family; and as for yours, she is giving Dick advantages you would hardly be able to give him yourselves. I think we both have reason to be grateful for what she is doing for our children. I realize it more since I have seen her with Edward; and I am thankful that Austenville was not allowed to go out of the family."

"I suppose it is all for the best, although I don't see how; but are you willing your girls should grow up to be like Margaret?"

"If you mean in character, I answer, yes. I could desire nothing better for them than that they should be as good, intelligent, and energetic as their Aunt Margaret. You don't begin to appreciate her. Father understood her better than any one else, and he said she had the best head for business in the family."

"She always flattered father, so that he thought her perfect. He did more for her than he did for us."

"She did more for him than we did. She devoted herself to him. She gave him the best of the best part of her life, while we were free from all anxiety on his account. She deserves all the good fortune and all the happiness which can come to her. She has had her share of discipline in life, and I hope she will have a full share of recompense. We chose our own lot; while, in a certain way, hers was meted out to her. We

hear that Dick is taking high rank in his classes."

"I believe he is doing well, but I miss him so much, I could almost call him home. His father needs him in the store, and is sometimes sorry he is not there."

There was no bright side for Mrs. Fielding. She had felt herself wronged, that her Sister Margaret had been preferred before her in her father's will, and this sister's prosperity increased her own sense of injury. She, with her husband, were the only persons interested who did not rejoice that the venture they had pronounced rash and foolish was likely to prove a grand financial success. Uninfluenced, she, too, might have rejoiced, but the constant complaining to which she was compelled to listen had made the subject intolerable to her.

On his way from market, Edward Stuart made a short visit at home; bringing good reports of Clarke, who was giving entire satisfaction to his employers.

"I think he begins to feel that he might

have gained by attending school a year longer, as I advised, but he does not acknowledge it."

"He can go now," replied Mrs. Stuart. "He is not obliged to remain where he is."

"No, mother, but he will be likely to do so, and perhaps make up for deficiencies by evening study. There is every opportunity for that without overtaxing his strength."

"I have never been so anxious about his health as about his habits."

"They are all right, mother, and I believe he has enough of religious principle to withstand the temptations to which he will be exposed."

"Do you believe that?" asked the mother joyfully.

"I do. He has talked with me very frankly, and I believe he is a Christian, although he has many doubts and fears."

"Then let him do as he pleases. I shall not attempt to dictate to him."

"It will be best not to. He is looking forward to selling our goods, when he has

acquired the requisite knowledge of business; and that will be a great incentive to him."

"I trusted to your judgment in the matter, and I shall trust it still. As for Mason, I am glad it is not time for him to decide upon a vocation. I shall have one boy with me for a few years longer."

"And the best of the three, mother. My irrepressible brother, as I have always called him, has the wisest head and the warmest heart of any boy I know. You can trust him to mark out a path for himself. It will probably be different from what we would choose for him, but it will be the best for him. Everybody in Austenville holds him in the kindest remembrance. His little talks in our Sunday evening meetings had a great influence."

"And yours, my son. I have no more to desire for you than what I am sure you will achieve. We are all indebted to your Aunt Margaret beyond our ability to repay."

"Yes, mother, we are; more than we can

repay, and more than we can compute. She seems to me like a dear elder sister, so wise and good, I need no other counsellor. Then she is such a pleasant companion, I am never lonely when with her."

He was, however, very lonely without her, when she came to her old home to spend a few weeks; yet what was his loss was gain for many others.

The doors seemed to open of themselves, that she might pass within. Every article of furniture was in its place, as if waiting to welcome her. There were the same sunny nooks, with vines wreathing picture-frames and vases. Brightly-tinted autumn leaves were arranged in wreaths and crosses, as she had arranged them for years.

"The girls did all this," said Cousin Rachel. "They said Aunt Margaret would like them, and they and Mason spent last Saturday dusting the library, every book and every shelf."

"They are very thoughtful; and here they come to tell me they are glad to see me."

They were so glad, they all talked together, each trying to express more than another; the girls so largely in the majority, that Mason said he would wait for his share of attention until he could have the whole.

This time came at last, when he could sit down beside his aunt and have a good long talk, just what he desired. He had many questions to ask. He must know particularly of Jessie, and Norah, and Robert.

"Now, Margie, can't you stay with us half of the winter?" he asked. "We want you so much. Couldn't Mr. Bumstead and Edward take care of the mill? I should think they might."

"They could not very well take care of all the people; and, besides, I choose to do my own part of the work. You are well cared for here."

"Yes, Margie, I know that, but we want to see you every day. I suppose, 'though, we must give you up; but we shall make the most of you while you stay. I wish I could go back to Austenville with you, long enough

to see all the good people. Have Jessie and Norah made lots of beautiful things this fall?"

"Yes, some beautiful things, and many which are beautiful only because they are useful."

"And is Miss Greenleaf just the same?"

"Just the same, only that she is improving. She has a larger school, and, besides, she hears some lessons in the evening."

"Does Harold Dorsey recite to her?"

"Yes."

"And Robert Bumstead?"

"Yes."

"Is Harold going to stay there always?"

"I cannot tell you. I presume, however, that he will not. He may wish to attend school."

"I wish he could go where Dick is. Wouldn't he make a grand scholar?"

The young man was sometimes nearly ready to give up his present situation and apply for admission to some school where he could have the privilege of study while work-

ing to defray his expenses. But Mr. Elliot advised him to wait until he had at least a hundred dollars.

"That is not much, but it will give you a feeling of independence, and tide you over a few months. This winter you can be learning here, and I think it will be best for you to stay with us."

"Then I shall stay," answered Harold simply, and no more was said upon the subject.

When the Thursday evening meetings were resumed he was among those most interested; ready to do his part, and quite surprising his associates by his original remarks and general intelligence. He had improved in his personal appearance. The peculiarities of manner acquired in his former isolated life were fast disappearing.

"He is getting beyond his business," remarked Mr. Gray, when some reference had been made to him. "I don't mean that he neglects it, or feels above it, but it ain't what he ought to be doing, and he knows it as

well as I do. I am satisfied to keep on where I am, because I am doing what I am fitted for; but it ain't so with Harold. I don't know what I might have been, if I had been sent to school and let liquor alone, but if I can pay for my house, and give my children a decent chance in the world, I won't complain. That's what I told Jane Sperry the other day, and she said that was all I had any right to expect."

"We have a right to expect all we deserve. I find I am expecting a great deal more than I deserve."

"You deserve a great deal, Mr. Elliot. I think the same of you I do of Harold. You ain't doing the right kind of work. You ought to be in a larger place."

"I shall stay here. I came to stay; and so long as I can earn enough for myself and Jessie I shall find no fault with my work or my wages. What I am I know only too well. What I might have been does not matter to me now."

"You might have been one of the first

men in the country," said Mr. Gray, half under his breath, as he was left alone.

Not long after, Mr. Elliot returned to make an explanation.

"When I said that what I might have been does not matter to me now, I did not mean that I am indifferent to it; but that, as I cannot recall the past, I can only make the most of what remains to me in life. No man can escape the reward of his doings, be they good or evil. I am paying a heavy penalty for sin and folly."

"I don't see why you shouldn't be a happy man, Mr. Elliot."

"I have a great deal to make me happy; but the happiest and most successful man is the one who lives nearest to God, whatever may be his condition in life. God's grace is sufficient for the vilest of sinners, and he will pardon all who come to him; but he does not make our lives the same they would have been if we had not sinned."

"I know that; and sometimes, when I think

about it, I don't see how He can overlook so much."

"Because Christ died for us, and now lives to make intercession for us."

"It must be that. It can't be anything else. Mr. Elliot, you must think that Mr. Peavey, over here, is a happy and successful man."

"I do think so."

"But he is poor, and always has been. He has lived right along on that same little place, working year in and year out, just managing to make a living. But if there is a Christian in the world, he is one. He and his wife have done a great deal of good nobody knows anything about. There ain't many would have taken Harold in as they did."

"They are getting their reward for that. Mr. Peavey told me they should lay up a little this year, and that is more than they have done before for a long time."

"Everybody seems to be saving something. I have made the first payment on my house. It wasn't much, but it was a beginning; and if

I live I shall have a nice place of the old rookery. Jane Sperry says I've got a good foundation to start on, and my wife thinks so too. Between them both, they are likely to be right. Jane Sperry was always a sensible woman; 'though brought up as she was, she couldn't do much different from what she has. She is trying to help Esther Wetherell along, and that is helping herself at the same time. She quotes Miss Austen as authority in all things; and it is my opinion there ain't a woman in the country doing more good than Miss Austen."

CHAPTER XV.

THE PEOPLE'S LIBRARY.

"MOTHER, please let me go to church and Sunday-school with Jessie. There is room for me in the big wagon, and I want to go. My dress and hat are good enough to wear, and I want to go more than I ever wanted to do anything else in all my life," pleaded Norah Borine.

"What will your granny say? I don't like to go against her," was replied. "I should be willing to have you go if she didn't object."

"May be, mother, she will get to think as we do, if we are only good and patient, and all the time make her feel that we love her, even if we don't do as she wants us to about meetings. I think she will, mother."

"I don't know, Norah dear. Your granny is getting to be an old woman, and she's not

one to change. May be it will come 'round easy some way."

"I do hope it will, I want to go so. I have learned the lesson with Jessie for four Sundays, and she is going to lend me her library-book to read. She says it is a nice story, that makes her think of the people here in Austenville; because it is all about working, and fixing up houses and gardens, and going to meeting. I can have it to-morrow."

"Then you had better read the book to us while we work. Your granny always likes to hear you, and you can begin to-morrow evening."

"Sure, I'd like to hear the story," said Mrs. Rady, when Norah proposed reading it aloud. "The sound of your voice will make me forget that I'm tired."

So the reading was commenced; and presently, in her eagerness to listen, Mrs. Rady dropped her sewing, and resting her head upon her hand was oblivious to all around her save the words of the story. The clock struck their usual hour for retiring, but she

wished Norah to read longer, and it was not until the child showed signs of weariness that she said:

"Sure, you'd better stop. You're that tired that you'll not be rested in the morning. You'll finish it the morrow evening. It's the nicest bit of a story my old ears ever heard; and you such a scholar, of my own flesh and blood. I never thought to see the day; but it's come, honey, and your granny's that proud, working 's not much more than play. I've lived through hard things, but it's all made up to me now. It's as Miss Greenleaf said: When the Lord takes away one thing, he gives us another, if we only bide at our duty. I've tried to do as well as such a poor, ignorant body could."

"O granny, you are a dear old woman," exclaimed Norah, moved by the tears upon the furrowed cheeks. "I don't know what mother and I could do without you. It don't seem as though we could live at all."

"And is that the way you feel to your old granny? Then I'll just be working on, and

not mind what's gone. There's nice children in the story, but none like my Norah."

The next evening the reading was resumed, and the story completed.

"Where ever did you get it?" then asked Mrs. Rady for the first time.

"It is Jessie's library-book. She got it at the Sunday-school. She gets one every Sunday; and if I went with her I could get one too. I wish I could go."

To this no reply was made, and during the week no reference was made to the Sunday-school. But the next Sabbath, when Norah had shut herself into her chamber, that she might not see the big wagon with the well-dressed women and children which filled it almost to overflowing, her grandmother asked for her, remarking:

"She always likes to see the wagon start."

"She feels that bad because she can't go in it, she don't want to see it," replied her mother.

"And she fretting like that! Let her go. I'll not be the one to keep her. The child

may go for all me. She's that spry, there's time enough."

Mrs. Borine stayed to hear no more. Norah fairly shouted for joy, and hastened to make herself ready, which she did in season to respond to the last call for passengers. With her Testament in her hand, she was lifted to a seat beside Jessie Elliot, who said not a word to express the gladness which beamed from her eyes.

Norah was conscious of being as well dressed as her friend; and having thoroughly learned the lesson for Sunday-school she felt quite at ease as she entered the church. Here, all was new to her, and nothing escaped her notice. Much of the sermon and prayers was beyond her comprehension; but the singing pleased her, and to all she gave the closest attention. Sunday-school was all she had anticipated; and when allowed to select a library book, she chose one she thought would please her grandmother.

The company from Austenville said little on their way home. Mr. Bumstead was evi-

dently thinking more of what he had heard, than of the horses of which he was so proud; but as he set Norah down at her home, he said:

"I never was gladder in my life to give anybody a lift than I was to give you one to-day. You'll go again, and may be your mother some time. There will always be room."

"Yes, sir. Thank you."

"And did you like it, child?" asked Mrs. Rady.

"Yes, granny; and I got a book to read to you. After supper I can read till time for meeting, and that will make the time seem shorter."

"Well, child, I'll be glad to hear you; but now I'm thinking you're hungry for supper."

"I never thought of being hungry, but the supper looks real nice. Why, you have got on the next to the best tablecloth, and the glass dishes. It looks as though we were going to have company. I should think Miss Greenleaf was coming."

"It's only yourself that's come, and you're better to me than the teacher. I wouldn't cross you, only for your good. I'm not sure but I've done wrong in giving my word to let you go, the day, but I wouldn't stand against your mother. It's long since I've been to my own church, and it's little I've known of any other; but the mistress and the master can't be bad. If it's by their works ye shall know them, they must be Christians."

"I know they are, granny; and if you would go to the Sunday evening meetings, you would know there are lots of other Christians too. I wish I was as good as Jessie and Harold. I try not to flame up and say bad things, but they come before I think."

"Sure, child, I was thinking, the day, that you've changed in that."

"I have tried to change, and — and — when I do bad I ask God to forgive me and help me do better the next time."

This was said hesitatingly, and, to Norah's great relief, no reply was made. Supper was eaten with gladness, if not with thank-

fulness. There had never been any stint of food in this home, and already there was a nicer arrangement than had once been thought necessary. Mrs. Rady, old as she was, was learning that there are other needs than those of the body. The kindness shown to her granddaughter by those whom she regarded as above her had both surprised and gratified her. Miss Greenleaf came in in such a friendly way, that the barriers which had seemed to hedge them around were fast disappearing.

"Read now, child, will you?" said the grandmother, when supper was over and the table cleared.

"Yes, granny, I will," replied Norah quickly. "I tried to get a book you would like, and I guess you will like this one. Jessie said it was good."

"I shall like it if you read it; but I'm thinking there'll not be another story as sensible as the one you read last week."

The book proved interesting, and when

Miss Greenleaf called at the hour for meeting, Norah was still reading.

"Will I go?" she asked.

"Sure, you will, and your mother, too, if she chooses. I'll just be resting while you're away, and glad when you come back."

"O, granny, I wish you were going too. It isn't like church. It's only talking, and singing, and praying; and it is the same God they pray to, because, you know, there isn't but one."

"There's but one, yet I'll bide at home while you go. There'll be all the evenings but Thursday for the book."

Miss Austen was missed from her accustomed seat, but there was no lack of those willing to help sustain the meeting. Mr. Peavey had consented to lead; and after a short prayer, he repeated an entire psalm, which he said expressed the real sentiments of his heart. He had been young, and was now old, yet he had never seen the righteous forsaken.

"In His own way, God manifests Himself

to His people as He does not to the world. He may wait many years, but the promises are sure; so that no Christian need be discouraged, even though the way seem dark. My last days are my best days; and I bless God with all my heart and soul that He has preserved me alive unto the present time."

Others spoke in the same strain of thankfulness. The singing echoed their words, and the prayers were especially fervent.

Esther Wetherell was there, her plain face lighted up with interest, and her voice heard, as she responded to the call for Bible verses. She had come from home, alone, that evening, leaving her cousin for another week's absence.

She was rapidly acquiring skill in her mill work, having been already transferred to the place Mr. Bumstead designed for her. Studying under Miss Greenleaf's direction, she showed herself a ready scholar; and, with her increased wages, dared to hope for even better opportunities.

Jane Sperry wondered that she could ac-

complish so much; while she, in turn, wondered at each week's changes in her home. There was always something new to relate, and something new to display. The south room was opened, the curtains rolled up, and a stand of thrifty plants set where the sun would shine longest upon them. The occupant of this room, too, sat in the sunshine; while the curtains which had long hung over her heart parted to admit the genial light of friendship. Occasionally a neighbor invited her to ride to church, or made her an afternoon visit, which was a mutual pleasure.

"If I hadn't been so hampered, I believe I might have done something of more account than I have," she said to Mrs. Gray when they were together. "When I was young, I used to wish I was a boy, so I could go ahead and do what I wanted to; but in those days girls didn't strike out for themselves as they do now. They took things pretty much as they came, and often they came hard."

"Things generally come hard to them that don't do anything to bring them 'round. But

there's Miss Austen showing us what a woman can do; and just that helps us all, even if she didn't do anything else."

"So it does. It helps every woman anywhere 'round, and Esther says she wants girls to learn some business they can get a living by without being dependent. She told somebody, too, she thought there were a good many women who ought to be farmers. *I* ought to be a farmer. I might have been a good one. There's my six acres of land, but it never amounted to much to me. I've let it for pasture for almost nothing, till it has all run out; but if I could manage to get started with it, I could raise good crops and keep some stock. Esther and I were talking about it the last time she was at home. It would be slow work at first, but I should like it a good deal better than knitting, and puttering 'round as I've had to. I'm going to ask your husband about it."

"He'll tell you just what he thinks, and he has good judgment about farming. We ought to help you too. I

don't know what we should have done when we lived by the brook, if it hadn't been for you."

"I didn't do half I wanted to; but I was poor then, and sometimes Esther and I had to live poorer than we wanted to. She is going to be better off than I ever was."

"Why shouldn't she be? She is where she can't help learning all the time, besides earning good wages. I hope she will keep our school next summer, and others hope so besides me."

"I don't know what she will do, but Miss Greenleaf says she learns fast."

Her evening scholars were a source of both pleasure and profit to Alice Greenleaf. In preparing herself for their recitations various subjects for study were suggested, while the eagerness with which they listened to instruction kept her on the alert for their benefit. Harold possessed by far the most active and original mind, yet Esther Wetherell and Robert Bumstead were much above the average

in quickness of perception and desire for knowledge.

Thursday evening, the hall was crowded, and those having the meetings in charge were expected to provide entertainment of which no one could reasonably complain. A subscription was started for the purpose of establishing a library, and upon Miss Austen's return Mr. Elliot gave her a list of names, with the sums which had been already pledged.

"You have done more than well," she said, after glancing at the paper in her hand. "I expected to furnish the library myself."

"I knew that you did, but we shall all value it more if it costs us something; and no one has given beyond his or her means, unless it is Mrs. Rady. I told her I thought she had pledged too much, but she said she knew best, and Norah would soon have the whole library through unless it was large. She is a whole-souled woman, Miss Austen, if she *is* a Catholic. There is hope of her too. Now that Mrs. Borine and Norah are

coming out to meeting I shall not be surprised to see her."

"I do not expect that, Mr. Elliot, but it may be that she will receive enough of truth into her heart to make her wise unto salvation. I have not seen her yet. This afternoon I must go down to the mill and look at my friends. I suppose I shall lose some of them by next spring. Harold will be going."

"I presume he will. He does not speak of it, but I think the desire to attend school grows upon him, and I shall encourage his going in the spring."

"He cannot do better than go to the same academy with Dick Fielding. It is a first-class school, with a fine corps of teachers. The charges are not extravagant, and his surroundings will be favorable to general improvement. It would be pleasanter for him, too, to have a friend there, although he knows how to make friends for himself."

"Yes, Miss Austen, he does; and he has gained so much in self-reliance that he would not shrink from going among strangers; yet,

your nephew's friendship would be of great value to him. I shall be sorry for Mr. and Mrs. Peavey when he goes, but they will think of his interest more than of their own."

"He will not forget them."

"He never forgets a kindness, and he says he has no *un*kindness to remember. He can afford to be magnanimous."

"Indeed he can, Mr. Elliot, and I hope to see him all he has the ability to be. I am interested in a large number of young people as well as of older people."

"There is more to hope for from the young. They have their life all before them."

"Yes; but after experience, which has well done its work, there come the glorious autumn days of life, when the richest harvests are garnered in."

CHAPTER XVI.

HAROLD DORSEY IN SCHOOL.

THE winter was one of great prosperity to Austenville. The land around the sources of the brook was purchased; and this with some other purchases, gave to the mill company the virtual control of the stream above them. The towns-people rejoiced at this, as a promise of still larger investments in manufacturing. New buildings were erected in place of those which had fallen into decay, but which had been used temporarily since the re-occupancy of the mill.

The carefully selected library was kept at the great house, but other provision would be made for it when the new hall was completed. There was much talk of *our* library, *our* school, *our* meetings, and *our* hall; all of which tended to draw the workmen and

workwomen into closer sympathy with each other and with their employers.

Mr. Gatchell enlarged his store, and added to his stock a better grade of goods than he had formerly kept.

Miss Greenleaf's school was the banner school of the town, and she was engaged for another year. An evening was devoted to the examination of those she had taught out of school hours, when all present accorded great praise to teacher and pupils.

This examination was in fact the graduating exercise for Harold Dorsey, who was soon to leave. He had a hundred dollars, part of which he had saved from his earnings, and part of which Mr. Stuart had insisted upon his accepting as a loan. With this he was to join Dick Fielding as a student in the academy, at the opening of the spring term.

"I haint a word to say against it, 'though seems to me everything in the house and outdoors will miss you," responded Mr. Peavey, when told of this decision. "We've kept

you longer than we expected to, and it's fitting you should go. We won't talk any more about it now, but to-morrow, maybe, we shall have something more to say."

Mrs. Peavey did not speak. She felt that they were to lose Harold for the remainder of their lives; yet she was no less willing than her husband to do what she could for him.

"We've been talking it over between ourselves, Harold; and, as you've made up your mind to go to school, we've made up our minds what we'll do about it," said the old man the next day. "We've got a little saved up, and we want to give you fifty dollars of it to help you get started. It's in a note that I can get the money on at short notice, and I'll have it ready for you in season. I wish it was more, but —"

"Why, Mr. Peavey, do you think I would take money from you?" cried the young man, as tears filled his eyes. "You and your wife have done more for me than anybody else ever did, and I would rather never go to

school a day than take a cent of your money. I thank you all the same, and I can't tell you how much good it does me to know that you cared enough for me to think of it, but you must keep the money for yourselves. If God spares my life, you shall not want for a friend to care for you in your old age."

"But, Harold, we want to help you some," urged Mrs. Peavey. "We should feel better to do it, and then if we ever need it you could pay it back."

"If I need it I will borrow it, but I mean to earn as I go. I am to work with Mr. Elliot through the summer vacation, and that will give me something towards paying my bills for the fall term."

"I should 'most thought you'd waited till fall, and then start fair."

"It will take me one term to find out who and where I am. The other students know what school is, while all will be new to me."

"It will be like a new world to you, my boy, but the same God will hold you accountable for what you do."

"I shall never forget that, and I shall never intentionally do what I know to be wrong," said Harold.

He worked as usual until the day before he was to leave, and this he spent in calling upon his friends and doing some last things at home. He was well provided with suitable clothing. He had the means for purchasing necessary books, and there was no reason why he should feel any misgivings. Miss Austen bestowed upon him some substantial gifts, which he accepted gratefully; and Mr. Elliot assured him of a friendship which would never fail him.

"You have a work to do in the world which no one else can do," said this friend. "The discipline of your life has not been without its purpose. All I can do for you I *will* do, and may God bless you with the choicest of His blessings."

With the opening of the spring, business in Austenville received a fresh impetus. The running capacity of the mill was taxed to its utmost. There were two relays of help; one

working by day and the other by night, and, when occasion demanded, some worked extra hours, that there might be no break in the time. Of these, Mrs. Rady was one, protesting that she was better able than most, and had greater need to do what she could.

"I am just doing it for Norah," she said to Miss Austen. "She's not like her mother or me. She can't be working at the loom, and I'd not have her do it if she would. She was like her father, but she's that changed at home I'd hardly be knowing her but for her face. She's that mild and loving, when she used to flame up and say things that hurt me. It's not many years more I can work, but while I can I'll be laying up for her. She must go to school, and there's music in her fingers that must come out. Her mother's not strong, as I've been, and so I must keep on doing."

"Norah ought to be very grateful to you, Mrs. Rady, and I have no doubt that she will be."

"It's not the grateful, but the loving I

want, and that's what I get, till it warms my old heart clear through."

"Norah is a bright girl, and she will make a fine woman, to repay you for all you do."

"I'm not looking for pay, Miss. It's only to have her happy and satisfied, and doing the things she likes. Jessie Elliot will, may be, be going off somewhere to school, and why not Norah go with her?"

"There is no reason why she should not go, if you choose to be at the expense of sending her."

"I do choose, Miss, but not till she 's done with Miss Greenleaf. Begging your pardon, the teacher is every inch a lady."

"Certainly she is, and we are fortunate to have her among us."

"That we are, and we'll be fortunate to have her back."

The people of her native town were anxious that Alice Greenleaf should remain with them. Her old home, as she had builded it, piece by piece, was very dear to her. She could see where she might make many im-

provements, and she longed to put her own hands to the work; but there was more for her in Austenville than here, and she was glad when she saw Mr. Bumstead at the station.

"Esther has left us," he said as they drove homeward. "The people in the district where her cousin lives wanted her to keep the school, and she is going to. She said she thought she'd come back in the fall; but for the summer she has her plans; and Miss Austen advised her to go, 'though we didn't like to lose her."

"I shall miss her."

"So shall we all. She'll not be making the wages she did in the mill, and she'll not be spending the same number of hours. Mr. Gray says there's farming to be done at home, and she is to help."

Mr. Gray could speak with authority, as he had been consulted upon the subject. Miss Sperry was ready to begin in a small way, according to her means, hoping for an increase as time went on. In her barn was a cow, for which she had paid by hard work.

She had declined to let her pasture, and was fencing off two acres for mowing where the grass was best. Every foot of her garden had been ploughed, and she proposed to have as good a crop of vegetables as any farmer in town. She and Esther could do the necessary work, and another year she would have an acre taken out of the pasture for cultivation. Meanwhile, she could feed a small flock of sheep, and this flock was soon seen on the best of terms with her cow.

"Fifty years old, and just begun to live," she exclaimed one morning as she brought in a brimming pail of milk. "The folks 'round here aint used to women farmers, but they must get used to one."

"And a successful one, too," responded Esther Wetherell.

"Well, I hope so, though it aint best to say much till I see how I come out. I shan't have much to sell this year except some butter and a little wool; but we shall have the pig, and butter and milk enough for ourselves."

"And all that grows in the garden."

"Yes; and things are coming up there thick enough. We shall have a job of weeding and transplanting, but I guess we can get through with it. We can't afford to hire any more than we are obliged to."

"I am to do the hiring, Cousin Jane, and so pay something towards my board for all these years. I begin to feel rich. This is a very comfortable, pleasant house for summer and winter too."

"I didn't use to think it was very pleasant, but that was because I kept the pleasantest, most comfortable part of it, shut up. That is the way a good many folks do 'round here, but I shan't do it again. We've got a good cool pantry for our milk and butter; and we've got rooms good enough for ourselves, and we'll use them. The vines we planted last month have got well started, so they'll shade the south room windows, and that was all we needed on that side of the house. If you get along well at keeping school, and I make my plans all work, we shall have a good store laid by for winter."

No one doubted that Esther Wetherell would do well in school, and no one was disappointed in the result. She impressed her scholars with something of her own ambition, and when the day for examination arrived they acquitted themselves to their own and their teacher's credit. The school-room was filled. Every parent was present, with others not living in the district. Short, congratulatory speeches were made, in which all were remembered and complimented.

It was a proud day for Jane Sperry; in honor of which she wore her best dress, and consented to an arrangement of her hair, taking from her apparent age at least ten years. Sitting there after school was dismissed, with the hum of voices all around her, and a smile upon her face, she looked little like the woman who had presented herself before Miss Austen for the sale of stockings.

"Well, Jane, I don't believe you are any sorry you took Esther to live with you," said Mr. Gray.

"Sorry!" she repeated. "I never was

sorry. Esther hadn't anywhere else to go, and I hadn't anybody else to live with me. I did all I could for her, and now she can do for herself. She is getting beyond me, but I aint sorry for that either."

They walked home together, and entered their home, thankful that the lines had fallen to them in such pleasant places. Miss Sperry seated herself in the large rocking-chair which, until a few months before, had for many years occupied the darkest corner of the best room.

"I didn't expect to see anywhere near so many folks," she remarked when Esther came in from the kitchen. "They must have thought there would be a good deal to hear, and there was. It made me ashamed of my ignorance, but I hope you won't ever be ashamed of your old cousin."

"I only hope she will have no reason to be ashamed of me. But now let us have our supper. If Mr. Bumstead should come for me Monday morning I shall need every min-

ute of this evening and to-morrow to work in the garden. Weeds grow all summer."

"I have learned that to my sorrow, but they aint going to get the upper hands of us. Folks can do 'most anything they set out to, if they only keep steady at it; and I am going to keep at farming as long as I can milk a cow and make a pound of butter. Mr. Gatchell don't give me a chance to get much butter ahead, but we won't scrimp ourselves. Scrimping don't pay, not when you can help it. Sometimes you can't, and then there aint any other way. I wondered this afternoon if you'd be satisfied without going to school any more."

"I intend to go, but the right time has not come yet. Miss Greenleaf wants to go, too, and perhaps we shall go together."

"She won't go for a year."

"No; and I am not ready to leave you at present."

"I am glad of that, but when you are ready I shan't stand in your way. When Harold Dorsey comes we shall hear a report

from school. Everybody wants to see him, and I want to know how much beyond you he is in his studies. I don't believe he has gained much on you. You have studied a good deal this summer."

"I have, but it is different from studying in school; and besides, Harold is a quicker scholar than I am. Considering the way he was brought up, no one here can compare with him. Mr. Stuart says he could not, himself, have done half so well. Mr. and Mrs. Peavey will have a jubilee when he comes. The old man will repeat a psalm of thanksgiving, and thank the Lord for manifold mercies. That is what he always does when he is so happy his own words fail him."

"Did you ever think, Esther, that perhaps when Harold comes back, things won't look to him as they used to? He may not care so much for the old folks."

Some such thought had caused them a little anxiety; but all this was dispelled when they heard his hearty greeting and felt the clasp of his hand. They had seen him com-

ing in the big wagon with Mr. Bumstead, and stood outside the door to receive him. For the first time, Mrs. Peavey kissed him, apologizing, by saying:

"I couldn't help it, Harold. I was so glad to see you, I didn't think what I was doing."

"Thank you for it," he answered with a smile which had all his heart in it. "I never remember being kissed in my life, unless it was before I lived with Mr. Dorsey, until Miss Greenleaf kissed me the night before I went away. While I was gone, some little children kissed me, and it is good to be welcomed home with a kiss. It is good to be here too."

"As good as being in school?"

"Each is good in its season, and school has been better for knowing that I could come here when the term was over. Now I will take my trunk up-stairs, and then I shall be ready for supper, which I see is waiting."

"Yes, Harold, and mother did her best for it."

"I know how good that is, and I shall bring to it a school-boy's appetite."

The walls of the low chamber had been papered, and where the floor was not covered with rugs, it was white as it could be made. The broad window was tastefully curtained, and there had been added to the furniture several new articles.

"How do you like the changes we have made up-stairs?" asked Mr. Peavey.

"I like them very much, but I am afraid you have taken too much trouble for me," was replied.

"Not so much as we'd been glad to, Harold. I told father we would do a little. I wished we could raise up the roof, but we couldn't afford the expense. If the roof was set up as Mr. Elliot's is, we could have two good chambers, and may be we shall some time. It has always been good enough for us, but if we are going to have a student coming 'round two or three times a year, we must have things better. You've grown since you've been gone, and Miss Austen told us

you'd done as well as any scholar in school, besides working for your board. That was too much."

"Not too much for my health. I could do it easily. I am stronger than most young men, and I needed the exercise. It was better for me to work as I did, and now I am all ready for six weeks of good hard work here."

"You have two months' vacation."

"Yes, sir, but I intend to spend a week or two near my old home."

"Shall you go alone?"

"I expect to. Dick Fielding is coming here with his sister and cousins, but I presume they will not care to go over again the road we travelled last summer. You have been well while I was away. You must have been, or you could not have done what you have."

"Yes, Harold, we have been well. We haven't had a sick day, and things have prospered with us. Folks seem to have prospered all 'round. There has been a good deal of visiting back and forth among neighbors that

haven't seen much of each other for a good many years, and we've been invited to tea at the great house. We wrote you about that. It's a nice place, aint it?"

"Yes, ma'am, and it is a blessing to the town to have it occupied."

"Yes, and the mill started up everything else with it. There has been more building done in town this year than in the last ten; and folks are talking now that some time there will be a larger mill beside the old one. That would make quite a village of Austenville. I asked Mr. Elliot about it, and he said it wouldn't be strange if that all happened."

CHAPTER XVII.

BORN TO BE A LEADER.

THROUGH the woods, treading the path now partly overgrown with creeping vines and tiny plants. These were noted, yet Harold did not stay his steps. Dear as was to him every stem and leaf growing from the luxuriant soil, friends were dearer far, and there were many to be seen.

"Harold, boy, or man as you are now, I have been watching for you. I knew you would not sleep without coming here."

"I think I could not sleep, so near, until I had been here. How you have improved your house!"

"How you have improved your mind, if all reports are true, and I doubt not they are."

"I have done the best I could, Mr. Elliot."

"And made a beginning of the end?"

"I hope I have. But where is Jessie?"

"She was here a moment ago."

She was there a moment later, shaking hands with Harold, who seemed to her to have grown so much, that she could not address him with her usual familiarity. She, too, had grown; but she was still a child, living for her father, and happy in so doing. Their visitor did not remain long; but with a promise to come again, went to call upon Miss Austen.

There was a scarcely definable change in his manner, yet she was quick to note it, and attribute it to a corresponding mental change. To her, he could speak of his experiences in school with more freedom than to Mr. and Mrs. Peavey, who would fail to comprehend some influences plain to her.

"You have had an opportunity to measure yourself with others engaged in the same pursuits," she remarked.

"Yes, ma'am, and it was what I needed," he replied. "I know now where I stand and what I must learn."

"You are not discouraged?"

"Not at all. I know what I can do, and if I live and am well, I shall succeed. Dick Fielding has been a great help to me. I tried not to make him ashamed of me."

"He was never ashamed of you, Harold. He wrote me that, at first, you had none of the awkwardness most students have when entering a new school. He says you have helped him."

"I am glad if I have. He will be coming here soon."

"Yes, and I hope we shall see you often during your vacation."

"Thank you. I shall be happy to come when I can, but I must work. I am to commence with Mr. Elliot in the morning, and there are some things I must do at home."

"You think you will be able to go on with your studies without interruption."

"I think so."

Here, the coming of Edward Stuart interrupted them; he giving to Harold Dorsey as cordial a welcome as he would have given to one of his brothers.

"Ready for haying?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, and Mr. Elliot says haying is ready for me. There will be a heavy crop."

"Yes, the land is beginning to pay a good profit. Mr. Elliot and Mr. Gray are good farmers, doing everything well they undertake."

"That is true," chimed in Mr. Bumstead, who, with his wife and Robert, had been walking in a remote part of the grounds. "We don't have poor workers on the premises; and it is glad I am to see one of our best workers back here. Will you take Robert when you go next time?"

"Yes, sir, if you wish him to go."

"We might as well be wishing it, and he wild to go," said Mrs. Bumstead, who had shaken hands with Harold while her husband was talking. "Speak for yourself, lad," she added, turning to the boy.

But Robert preferred to do this more privately, and Harold soon left, to redeem his promise to Mr. Elliot and call upon Miss Greenleaf, who said to him:

"I wish you were my brother;" when he responded heartily:

"I wish you were my sister."

She was interested to know the exact number of pages he had learned in history; how far he had progressed in Latin; how many themes he had written, and how often he had practised declamation. He told her how he had managed in regard to his expenses, and how small a sum had sufficed for his needs. With what he had, and what he could earn, he calculated to go through college without incurring any debts.

"But I am afraid your health will break down."

"I was never sick a day in my life," he replied to this expression of solicitude. "When I am tired, I sleep and am rested. I rest faster now than I used to, because I spend no time in wondering. My way is all plain before me."

"Do you mean that you have decided upon your profession, or work for life?"

"No, ma'am, I only mean that I must

work, and learn, and do all the good I can as I go along. There are so many who seem not to think of doing good. I wonder why."

"I have often wondered at the selfishness of people, although I have always found friends ready to help me."

"So have I, Miss Greenleaf. From the time I first stopped at Mr. Peavey's door, I have been constantly helped, and I expect to find friends as long as I live. People here in Austenville are mutual helpers. I have not seen Norah yet, but I suppose she is well."

"She is very well, and usually very happy. She is trying to subdue her quick temper, and she is as diligent a scholar as I have in school. She would be glad to see you, but she is shy of strangers, and now that you have been away so long, she will consider you a stranger."

"I am sorry, for I have no time to make new acquaintances. I must not stay longer now. The old people will be waiting for me."

"You are thoughtful for them."

"Yes, ma'am, and they are thoughtful for

me. They took me in when I had no home, and I should be very ungrateful to neglect them now."

"You will never be guilty of ingratitude, Harold."

"I hope I shall not, Miss Greenleaf, and I have so much to be grateful for, it keeps my heart running over all the time."

The old people were talking of him. Indeed, they could talk of nothing else. He had come back to them taller, manlier, and finer looking, yet with the same warm heart and kindly sympathy.

"We can't expect he will always be so," said Mrs. Peavey. "We must make up our minds to see him look over our heads some time."

"I aint going to make up my mind to any such thing," was replied. "If it comes, I'll bear it as well as I can, but as long as he whistles like that, he won't get so far above me that I can't see him. He has just come out of the woods, and he will be here presently."

"It is pleasant to come home at night," he said, as he entered the kitchen with a bound. "I have anticipated it many times when I was away, and now I realize it."

The day closed as days always closed in that home; and with the words of prayer upon their lips, its inmates lay down to sleep, waking in the morning, refreshed and ready for work.

Austenville was itself again, with a full working force; all devoted to the interest of their employers, although some were looking forward to other and more congenial labors. The great house received the same company of young people who had spent the previous summer there, and the hearty greeting between Dick Fielding and Harold Dorsey attested to their friendship. Clarke Stuart, too, was glad to claim Harold as a friend; while Mason pronounced him grander than ever.

Robert Bumstead stood somewhat in the background socially, but he had his plans for putting himself in a better position. His

grandfather and grandmother had yielded not unwillingly to his desire to attend school. Mr. Bumstead could afford the expense; and his eyes had been opened to see that Robert required a different training from what he had himself received.

"We have but him, and we will do what we can for him," said Mrs. Bumstead. "What is well enough for us would be that poor for him as to keep him fretting. I mind, now, how I was fretted when I was a girl, for what I couldn't have. We'll send Robert to school till he's had enough of it."

"Yes, wife, we'll send him, but he'll not have enough of it as long as there's a book before him. We've come upon strange times here, with the boys and girls at the library; and when the proper room is finished for it, Miss Austen is to make an addition. So Mr. Stuart says, and he knows. There are no secrets between them about the business here; and I'm thinking Clarke Stuart has a mind to learn it. He asked me many a question to-day about the quality of wool and cloth. It

would be a fine thing if all the buying and selling, and all the profits could be kept in the family."

"Mason don't care much for the mill."

"Not as Clarke does. He has too many projects in his head, to stop to study up the business from the bottom."

Mason renewed his acquaintance with Jessie and Norah; each of whom invited him and Robert, with the younger girls, to a tea party, at which the entertainment was worthy of the guests. In place of "camping out," there were picnics and excursions in which all could join. They explored the surrounding country, finding the most attractive locality under Miss Sperry's guidance. She had arranged some stones on a shelf, and these attracted the attention of Mason, who asked where she had obtained them.

"I found them on one of the beams in the open chamber, and I presume my brother put them there more than thirty years ago," she replied. "He used to bring home stones from the ledge and carry them up-stairs; but

I had forgotten all about it, until last spring, when I was cleaning house, I found these."

"They are splendid quartz crystals; some of the finest I ever saw," responded Mason. "Where is the ledge?"

"On the side of the hill, near the top. We used to see it from the kitchen-door; but the trees have grown up so we can't see it now."

Miss Austen remembered visiting this ledge with her brother; and now, after many years, she visited it again to find pockets of glittering crystals and masses of drusy quartz which would increase the value of the choicest cabinet.

"This is the best place I ever saw yet," exclaimed Mason Stuart, bending to his task of wielding a heavy sledge-hammer. "It rings hollow every time I strike on the ledge, and if I can break through this stone crust, you will see a sight to gladden your eyes."

"I have found some splendid crystals under the rock, right here in the dirt," now

shouted Sadie Fielding, and all hastened to her side.

Sure enough, there they were, and by looking carefully, other crystals could be seen adhering to the overhanging rock. There had been a pocket there once, and the lower part having crumbled, the crystals had dropped out from the stone.

"Dick and I may be able to break off this thin part of the ledge where it is so much worn," said Clarke Stuart.

"You will need my help," responded Mason. "You never learned to strike heavy blows."

"I have learned some things of which I was once ignorant," replied the elder brother good-naturedly, as he brought down his hammer with a will.

"I give it up. You can strike harder than I can, and you are a great deal better than you used to be, any way. There it comes; and isn't there a 'sight to behold?' as Aunt Comfort says. I tell you, when I grow up I mean to be a geologist, and study up how

such things grow. I can walk over here, and perhaps some time I can walk over the Rocky Mountains."

Only Mason could have said this, and for the remainder of his vacation the ledge was a favorite resort. Coming so frequently, too, he felt quite at home in Miss Sperry's house, where he always stopped for a friendly chat. She had several broods of chickens, which he compared with those of his friend, Rufus Brown; telling her of this friend's success in raising poultry, and how it had been accomplished.

"I tell you what it is, Esther; I learn a good deal from that boy's talk," she said, one Saturday evening, as they were conversing in regard to the events of the week. "He knows the most of all kinds of things of any boy I ever saw; and he tells it, too, in such a plain way, there can't anybody help understand it. He'll get a living anywhere, but he's dreadfully afraid he won't pay for all he has. He likes my gingerbread, but he always brings something in his lunch-basket to leave

in place of it; and when Robert Bumstead comes with him, they have a double portion. They hunted up two stray hens'-nests for me this week, and they always manage to give me a lift someway every time they come. They are two nice boys as you'll find anywhere, though Mason Stuart always takes the lead. He was born to be a leader and helper. To my mind, there are a good many such in Austenville, and some of them only waiting for a chance to get away. There is Harold Dorsey."

"He went to-day. He has gone to his old home to stay a week or two. He came to see Miss Greenleaf and me last evening, and we talked about going to school."

"I expect it, Esther, and I shall be glad to have you go. You can save up some of your wages; and by the time you get well started I can help you a little. The land is doing better than I expected, and part of what is raised belongs to you any way. I didn't expect to have any poultry to sell, but I shall have considerable, and a good many eggs.

There's a good market for them, too, right here at home. If I was ever glad of anything, it is that I set up farming, and Miss Austen says she has no doubt it was just the best thing I could do."

"Cousin Jane, you have talked so fast that I had no chance to speak; but for all that, I have something to say and must be heard," remarked Esther.

"Say on, cousin. I like to hear the sound of your voice. I miss it a good deal when you are gone."

"Well, then, I intend to go to school next spring. I presume I shall go only one term, and then, perhaps, teach through the summer. I shall earn enough for myself without taking anything from you. You have done enough for me already."

"We won't quarrel about it, Esther, but if we can help each other, I guess we better do it. It is better to eat half a loaf, with somebody you love eating the other half, than it is to eat a whole loaf alone. That is what I thought when I took you to live with me, and I hain't changed my mind since."



A VINE-CLAD COTTAGE.

Harold Dorsey, p. 305.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A VINE CLAD COTTAGE.

THERE were vines all around the house, trained over the narrow windows, and drooping from the low eaves. Wild-wood vines, too; some of them transplanted from miles away, yet all growing as luxuriantly as if they had first taken root there. The little porch, with its rough pillars, seemed but a mass of foliage, set here and there with starry blossoms.

Such a transformation! No marvel that Harold Dorsey gazed at the rustic picture before him, half ready to believe that he had mistaken the locality. But the trees stood the same as they had stood when he was a child; and this was his old home, beautified and adorned, — a fitting type of his new life.

Children, peering through the leafy screen, ran to tell their mother that a stranger was

standing in front of the house, and she hastened to see who this stranger might be.

"Harold Dorsey!" she exclaimed, and he responded to his name.

"I hardly recognized the house," he said after the usual greetings. "You must have been very diligent, to make such an improvement in so short a time."

"My husband has done most of it," she answered, with a bright smile. "He is that happy, he never seems tired, and you wouldn't believe he could do the half that he does. He was saying this morning it was near time for you to come. He has the rent waiting for you; and we have a cow, and a pig, and chickens; more than we ever had before, and more than I ever thought of having. But I'm telling you as though you cared to know," added the woman, blushing at her own boldness.

"I *do* care to know," was replied. "I rejoice in your good fortune. I expected you would have more than ever before. I hope you have found the house comfortable."

"It has been like a palace for such as us; and my husband has done a bit here and a bit there to make it more convenient. He is always working at something. Perhaps you'd come in and see for yourself."

Harold Dorsey was very glad to do so, examining the house from garret to cellar, complimenting the skill and taste which had so much improved it. He would not have thought it possible to effect so much with the means at command.

"Will you take supper with us?" asked Mrs. Beloy, as he turned to go. "Then you will be sure to see Jaques, and he will be right glad to see you at our table."

The invitation was accepted, and Harold went into the woods, promising to be back in time for the evening meal. He wished to mark some trees for cutting. They could be sold for a good price, and having obtained the control of his property, he proposed thus to increase his available funds. Mr. Dorsey had never allowed a tree to be felled; but they would furnish desirable lumber, and

with Mr. Elliot's advice they were to be cut down. It was partly to attend to this matter of business that Harold Dorsey had come, and partly to obtain the rest and change of thought he could find nowhere else. He was still intent upon his work of selection, when he heard Jaques Beloy's peculiar whistle, clear and sweet as the call of a bird to its mate.

"Harold Dorsey, my friend that was and is, you are welcome as sunshine in June," cried the man in joyous surprise, as he recognized his landlord. "I have the rent waiting for you."

"I think you have paid the rent in improvements," answered Harold.

"Not a bit of it. The improvements, as you call them, were at my own liking, and costing not much but a little time. I didn't know it was in me to handy up things in the way I have, but I did it all at odd jobs. Did you mind the vines?"

"Certainly I did, and admired them too. They look as though they had always been growing just where they are."

"I took them up careful, so they didn't know it; and I set them down careful, so they kept on growing. I thought of you when I was doing it, and it's a nice place now for a poor fellow like me."

"You will not always be poor, Mr. Beloy."

"I'll never be rich, Mr. Dorsey. I'm not looking or caring for it, but I'm the happiest man in the country, and my wife is the happiest woman."

"It is worth all my journey to know that."

"Then you are paid. You'll be staying to the meeting Sunday. It's in the schoolhouse yet, except when the days are over-fine, and the house is over-full; then we just turn out of doors, with the sky for a roof."

"Have you a minister?"

"Only at five o'clock, and not often then through the winter. But we have our own meeting and Sunday-school, and the books you sent us help along wonderful. They travel a long ways to be read, but they come back. Come to the house with me and have

supper. It won't be grand, but there'll be enough and a welcome with it."

If it was not grand, it was sufficiently good, and far better than the guest had been accustomed to eat in this house. The rent was paid. Jaques Beloy would have it so; gaining more in self-respect than he lost in money.

After supper, Harold Dorsey walked over to Mr. Andrews', where he engaged board for a week; a week crowded full of work, pleasure, and duty. He met the gentleman who wished to purchase his timber, and arranged a satisfactory bargain. He attended the schoolhouse meeting and taught in the Sunday school. He spent a day with Ben Andrews along the banks of a stream famous for trout; but more time was devoted to talking than to angling, and when they separated they felt that they had been mutually benefited.

The vacation passed quickly to all save Robert Bumstead, who in his impatience wished, each morning, that the day was at an end. He was sorry to leave those who had

been to him such loving parents, but he was going with Harold, and Harold was his especial admiration; none the less so when seen with a crowd of students who might have been considered his superiors in many things.

Harold Dorsey stood the peer of any one of his associates, allowing no lesson to pass which he did not fully comprehend. His capabilities as a worker gave him great advantage in earning money, so that his expenses were little more than he could pay from month to month without drawing upon his reserved fund. He commanded respect where another, doing the same work and living in the same frugal manner, would have been ridiculed. As time went on, his popularity increased, although he made it his first object to honor the religion he professed.

"I was surprised to see so many in the prayer meeting last evening," said Dick Fielding. "I knew you had invited them, or they would not be there."

"I was surprised that they did not come without an invitation," replied Harold. "Why should they not come?"

"Many young men would consider it hardly manly to attend a prayer meeting. They think praying well enough for old people and women, but for young men it shows a lack of spirit."

"Not manly! Praying not manly! God is God, and we are dependent upon Him. He is so far above us that we cannot compare ourselves with Him, any more than we can live without His preserving care. How can any one help loving Him and praying to Him? I couldn't help it any more than I could help the sun shining."

"But, Harold, you are different from most young men. You were brought up differently, and your knowledge of God came to you as a new revelation."

"It did come to me so, and you never can know how happy it made me. Perhaps if I had father and mother, brothers and sisters, to love me, I shouldn't have cared so much;

but it seems as though I should have cared more. I should have more for which to be thankful. Not that I have no cause for gratitude, Dick, for I am fast learning that if I have lost much from my life, I have also gained much. It was better for me to be brought up as I was, than to be allowed to follow my own impulses unrestrained. There is a good deal of force pent up in me which might have run riot, had I been controlled with a less firm hand."

"There can be no very evil propensities pent up in you, Harold."

"I don't know what they might have proved to be under different training. Mr. Dorsey taught me to control myself; and now, as I look back, I think he must have practised the greatest self-control himself. He had not always lived shut out from the world, and I think he had my best interest at heart, except in denying me the privilege of reading the Bible. With so little as I had to read, if the Bible had been open to me, I should have committed a large part of it to memory."

"I have no doubt of it, and it would have done much towards your education."

"It would, and it would have made me so happy. But it is mine now, and I would not exchange it for kingdoms."

"You ought to be a preacher, Harold. You love the Bible so well, you might inspire others with the same love."

"I shall not be a clergyman, but I shall always preach the gospel. The talks in our Austenville meetings seem to me better than any preaching. They have done me more good than all the sermons I ever heard."

"Those meetings are exceptional. There are no others like them."

"There might be if professing Christians would do their duty. I know there is not another Miss Austen, or Mr. Stuart, or Mr. Elliot; but if people have hearts full of love to God, and would speak it out, they would do a world of good."

"And if people would *live* out their religion, as Aunt Margaret and Cousin Edward do, others would be attracted. Aus-

tenville, as it now is, was founded upon religion."

"Everybody who knows anything about it knows that. There is no deception nor cheating among those who manage the business there; and honest employers make honest workmen."

"That is true, and besides, everybody in Austenville seems in the right place. Nobody else would do as well as Mr. Bumstead in his place, and Mr. Elliot is the very man needed where he is. Aunt Margaret says that, and there are not many women who could have done what she has. If she had not gone there, I should not be here now."

"Neither should I. When I heard Mr. Elliot tell Mr. Dorsey that a woman was starting up a mill, and he was going to ask her for work, I did not think I should ever see the mill, although I wondered what it was like. I remember that Mr. Elliot said if he could redeem his past life anywhere, he could do it there. I did not understand that exactly, but I knew he had done what he was

sorry for. Your Uncle William had been his friend, and the place had attractions for him on that account. He could not be more interested in it now, if the place was all his own, and Mr. Gray seconds his efforts."

"There will be a productive farm in a few years."

"It is productive now, as far as it has been cultivated, but a few years will make a great improvement in it. Other farms, too, in the vicinity will improve, because there is a better market for their crops. I think of Mr. Peavey with his little farm, and wish I was where I could lend him a helping hand. I know my letters do them good; but they are not very substantial help when there is hard work to be done."

The speaker might have thought otherwise, had he known how many times his letters were read, so that one was not laid away in the drawer until another was received. A letter from Harold was almost like having Harold himself with them; yet when he decided to remain away through the entire

school year, their disappointment was hard to bear.

They were, however, less lonely than they feared. They had many friends who were mindful of their welfare, while they were interested in the welfare of many others. Mr. Peavey wrote to Harold that they had their tea-set out oftener than ever before since they kept house.

One occasion, in which this and every other available piece of crockery was pressed into service, is worthy of special notice. A large party, self-invited, appeared at their door, bringing a bountiful entertainment, and asking for admission.

"I'm glad to see you, every one, but I don't know where you'll all find a place in our little house," said the dear old lady, quite taken by surprise. "I've been lonesomer than common to-day, and it's a pity I didn't know you were coming, so I could be thinking about it."

A fire was lighted in the "east room," and the company was all the merrier because of

narrow spaces. At an early hour the table was spread and refreshments were placed upon it, when Mr. Peavey asked a blessing, and thanked the Giver of all good for unexpected mercies.

Everything was provided by the guests, even to sugar and milk for tea and coffee, of which there was an abundant supply. More was left than was eaten, and the memory of this visit brightened all the winter.

If Harold had been at home there would have been nothing to desire, but this home felt his influence even when far away.

CHAPTER XIX.

A DISAPPOINTED OLD MAN.

AN old man sat alone in a handsomely furnished room. Upon the table before him was a package of papers which he was examining, while glancing now and then at the door, as if fearful of being interrupted.

He was not disturbed, and at length he returned the papers to a drawer which locked with a spring, and the key of which he always carried with him.

Later, a visitor was announced, and the lawyer who had transacted his business for many years was admitted to his presence.

"Sit down," he said feebly. "I sent for you to hear what is to be done with that scapegrace grandson of mine. Is there a chance of saving me from the disgrace of his imprisonment?"

"I think there is, sir. The parties concerned are willing to compromise the matter."

"For how much? Of course they want money."

"Yes, sir. They demand a larger sum than I hoped would satisfy them; but as they have the matter in their own hands, we must accede to their terms."

"Don't mention it. I will give you a check for the amount, but there is a limit to my forbearance. I have indulged that boy until he thinks he can count on me to help him out of any kind of trouble. He is twenty-two years old, and he has never done a fair day's work in his life. It is hard for a man at my age not to have one in his family he can depend upon. If my son had lived to bring up his boy, or if my daughter had married to please me, I should not be so forsaken now. But it is too late to talk of that, and I am afraid it is too late to expect any improvement in Morris."

"This may be a lesson to him, Mr. Bryant.

I certainly hope it will. If you could persuade him to give up the use of wine, even in the smallest quantities, he would not be so reckless. That is his greatest fault."

"About four years ago, you told me that the man Dorsey was dead," remarked Mr. Bryant, without replying to his companion.

"Yes, sir, he died some months before."

"And the boy under his care?"

"Has claimed the property held in trust for him, and upon the recommendation of those best acquainted with him, the property was given into his hands without guardianship."

"He is only twenty years old."

"Yes, sir; but he was represented to be fully capable of managing his own business, and a point was made of the injustice from which he had suffered."

"Injustice! What rights had he, — the son of a gambler and drunkard, who thought to gain my money by marrying my daughter! The boy ought to be thankful that he was not left to starve with his miserable father. I hope there is no doubt of his father's death."

"No doubt at all, sir. His death was fully substantiated."

"Well, I gave the boy a chance to live, and a few acres of land. That was more than he had any right to claim from me. Who recommended him to the authorities?"

"Influential friends."

"He will be likely to need all the friends he has. You are sure he knows nothing of his parentage?"

"I am sure that the man Dorsey did not tell him, and I know of no one else who *could* tell him."

"I intended to guard against that. The man Dorsey had too much at stake to betray his trust."

"Yes, sir. Is there any further business to transact this morning?" asked the lawyer after a silence in which his companion seemed to have forgotten his presence.

"Not any, only be sure that money is paid in season, and try and impress upon my grandson that such an irregularity must not happen again."

"Yes, sir, I will attend to it."

Mr. Carter rose to go, when the old man looked up, saying earnestly:

"You don't think I was too hard on the man Dorsey, do you?"

"You did as you thought best, Mr. Bryant," was the evasive reply. "He was found guilty of a crime, and criminals are seldom allowed to choose their punishment."

"He might have been sent to prison."

"Yes, sir, and that would have been worse than living in seclusion."

"I never knew that he complained."

"Never, Mr. Bryant, never. He was too proud a man for that. Too just a man, too. He was terribly tempted, and he fell, but he was better than many a man who walks our streets, honored and respected."

"You may be right, Mr. Carter; but it is all over now, and if I made a mistake, it is too late to rectify it."

"Yes, sir."

"That boy hadn't any claim on me, but I provided for him, and now he must provide

for himself. I never want to hear his name. Do you know where he is, Mr. Carter?"

"I think he is in school, fitting for college."

"Well, I hope he will prosper, 'though it is not likely I shall ever know any more about him. I supposed he would be like his father."

"His father was naturally a very smart man."

"He was an unprincipled wretch."

"Yes, sir."

So the interview closed, and the old man was left sitting by the table, glad to be alone, and yet shrinking from the companionship of his own thoughts.

He had one grandson, as he was often heard to say; a young man, not wanting in ability, yet as devoid of right principle as those whom he so severely condemned. This grandson had large expectations of wealth, and therefore felt no necessity for applying himself to business. His mother and sisters had no power to restrain him, while until

recently his grandfather had indulged him in every whim. This boy was the idol of his heart, but the idol was of clay, and it had crumbled at his feet.

He had been disappointed in his family; but he could draw consolation from the fact that he had not been disappointed in his plans for acquiring riches. If there had been irregularities in his transactions, they were carefully concealed. He had not hesitated even to shield himself at the expense of better men. A shrewd manager, he had deceived many; but the time had come when he could no longer deceive himself.

He was old and infirm, and he must soon die. Possibly he might live ten years, yet these would quickly pass; while probably his mortal existence would be ended long before that time. His will confronted a stronger will, and the bounds of his life were appointed by one in whom is no variableness or shadow of turning.

If his son had lived! But his son had not been all that he desired. His wealth was not

half to him he had dreamed it would be. He opened again the drawer, and took from it the same package he had been examining before his lawyer came in.

"It was not much after all," he murmured. "Not much to give a boy to start in the world. Twenty acres of wild land, that cost me less than Morris sometimes spends in a month. But he had no claim on me. It was all a free gift on my part."

A vision of the boy's mother rose before him, handsome, haughty, and self-willed,—one whose whole nature might have been softened and sweetened by Christian training, but who had grown up in an atmosphere of worldliness, to yield to the fascination of a grand passion.

It did not matter to her how she lived, if it was only with the man she loved; but she found to her cost that it mattered much to him whether she brought him a fortune. Too proud to humble herself before the father who had commanded her never to speak his name, she struggled on in the deepest pov-

erty, neglected and abused by him who had vowed to cherish and protect her, until death came to her release. She left one child, a boy; and with the cool audacity which characterized him, the father of this child informed Mr. Bryant where the boy could be found, and resigned all claim which the law might give him to "such an incumbrance."

"You can provide for him, or he can be sent to the poor-house. It does not matter to me which," wrote the heartless man.

Circumstances favored an arrangement by which the care of the boy could be assured without danger that he would prove troublesome. His grandfather refused to see him, and in the contract with his guardian stipulated that he should be called Harold Dorsey. Mr. Bryant had hoped he would die; but he lived, strong and sturdy.

Fitting for college, and managing his little property! Recommended by influential friends as capable!

The papers were returned to their place of concealment, and the wrinkled hands were

clasped tightly, as if thus unpleasant memories could be crushed out.

But these memories, whatever they might be, were for the moment set aside by the entrance of a young man, who said abruptly:

"Grandfather, I am sorry I have made so much trouble for you and Mr. Carter. I don't know how I could have forgotten myself so far; but I was a little under the influence of wine, and things looked differently to me from what they did the next morning. Thank you for helping me out of the scrape."

"It might have been a serious matter for you," responded the grandfather coldly.

"Yes, sir, I know it might. I was terribly cut up about it, but I was sure you would not let your grandson suffer when you could prevent it. So I put the best face I could on it, and trusted to your kindness."

"It would have served you right if you had been left to suffer the consequences of your wickedness. Yes, Morris, it was wickedness, or crime, just which you please to call it."

"Crime is an ugly word, grandfather."

"And an ugly fact. But you committed a crime, and I have saved you from the punishment you deserve."

"I should not allow any one else to say that."

"Mr. Carter said that."

"Yes, sir; but lawyers are expected to say disagreeable things. It is their privilege."

"And it is my privilege to tell you that I am thoroughly displeased with you. Unless you do better than you have been doing for the last year, I will cut you off with a shilling."

Morris Bryant looked at his grandfather as if doubting that he had heard correctly the words just spoken, and began to stammer some excuses for what he was pleased to term his irregularities.

"I am sorry I have displeased you," he said at length.

"You have done worse than that. You have disgraced me, disgraced your family, and disgraced yourself. I want you to fully

understand that. How is it about your quarter's allowance? How much have you on hand?"

"Not much," replied the young man with evident reluctance.

"How much? I want to know the truth about it. Tell me the exact amount."

"Well, grandfather, if I must, I must; and to tell the plain truth, I have spent every dollar of it. I don't know how it is that I get away with so much money; but before I think of such a thing, I find it is all gone. I am very sorry about it. I wish I could keep money in my pocket."

"If you were obliged to earn the money you put in your pocket, you would be more likely to keep it there, and it is quite time you decided upon some employment. I don't know who would have you in any place of trust, but you can begin at the foot of the ladder and work your way up."

"What could I do? I thought—"

"What did you think? Tell the whole story. There will never be a better oppor-

tunity, and it is time we understood each other."

"Well, grandfather, I thought perhaps I could help you look after your property — do some writing for you, and save you from some hard work."

"I know better than to trust my business with you. I have been to blame for indulging you as I have, but you have been ten times as much to blame for abusing my kindness, and presuming upon my money. I am not the richest man in the country, Morris. It would be possible to exhaust my wealth; but I have no intention of allowing it to be done. Are you in debt?"

Morris Bryant had not expected this question; but when it was repeated, he knew by his grandfather's appearance that it must be answered, and answered truly. As prevarication would not avail him, he acknowledged that he had contracted some debts he could not pay.

"Tell me the names of your creditors, and the amount that is due them," said Mr. Bryant sharply.

"Please excuse me, grandfather," responded the young man. "I shall manage some way to pay them, and I am unwilling to trouble you."

"Trouble me! You should have thought of that before. Make a clean breast of it, and I will set you square on your feet once more. After that, you must manage to live on your allowance and what you can earn."

"But, grandfather, I think you gave me reason to expect that you would pay my expenses for a year in Europe."

"Say no more about that. I have just paid that amount to keep you out of prison, and I shall waste no money in sending you abroad. Tell me the names of your creditors. If you keep back one, or falsify the amount you are owing, you will pay it yourself. I mean what I say," continued Mr. Bryant; and reluctantly the young man copied a formidable list of names from his memorandum book.

"Why, grandfather, I wouldn't have believed it was half so much," he exclaimed.

"I don't wonder you scold me. I deserve to live on bread and water until I can do better, and I had as soon live so as any way, if you are going to throw me over."

"As the law goes, you deserve bread and water; but I am going to give you another chance, and see what you will do. Remember, however, that this must not occur again."

Morris Bryant went out from that interview, serious and troubled. His debts were to be paid, but the money was not intrusted to him. He had received his quarterly allowance, but it would never suffice for his accustomed extravagant expenditure. He had been enjoined to drink wine sparingly; yet even in his grandfather's house he would be tempted to its use, while his mother would have considered herself wanting in courtesy, had she neglected to offer wine to her guests.

She was terribly mortified at her son's reckless conduct, but the loss of his grandfather's doting fondness would have seemed to her a far greater calamity. She had never been a favorite with her husband's father,

although she had striven hard to please him. Notwithstanding his own scheming and plotting in business, he liked people who were frank and outspoken, who expressed their opinions fearlessly, without calculating the effect.

When with her father-in-law, Mrs. Bryant calculated the effect of every word, and was therefore too self-conscious to be an agreeable companion.

Her son came home that day so out of humor, that his sisters wished him a thousand miles away; and when, by appointment, he went to Mr. Carter's office, he was prepared to assume the rôle of a highly offended gentleman.

"Another bill has been given to me for collection," said the lawyer. "It is not large, and I advise you to pay it without having it submitted to your grandfather."

The bill was examined, and its amount placed in Mr. Carter's hands, as the young man exclaimed impatiently:

"I hope that is all!"

"I hope it is," was replied. "Your grandfather believed that you had told him the truth in regard to your indebtedness, and he deserves better of you than that you should deceive him."

"Mr. Carter, I wish to ask you some questions," remarked Morris Bryant, when their business had been transacted. "My father had a sister, who married and died. Is her husband living?"

"He is not."

"Had she any children? Has my grandfather any grandchildren besides my sisters and myself?"

"I have often heard him say that he has not."

"But, Mr. Carter, you know whether he is mistaken."

"He is not likely to be mistaken about such a matter as that."

"No, sir; but it is possible that he might be, and I am interested to know certainly about it. It would be awkward for us if he should die without a will, and there should be other claimants to his property."

"If he had other grandchildren, they would have the same right that you have, Morris Bryant; and if you have a spark of manliness in your nature, you will stop speculating in regard to the disposal of your grandfather's property, and set to work to provide for yourself."

"I suppose it would be useless to ask you if my grandfather has made his will."

"Entirely so. I have no more time to spend with you. I have given you friendly advice you will do well to heed; but your grandfather's business does not concern you."

These words sent the young man in haste from Mr. Carter's office, more thoroughly dissatisfied with himself and with the world than when he had entered it. The remark, once made in his presence, that possibly Mr. Bryant had another grandson, he did not at the time think worthy of notice; but something had now prompted him to inquire of Mr. Carter concerning it, and the evasive answers he had received aroused his suspicions.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FRAGMENTS OF A WILL.

DEAD in his library. His housekeeper, a distant relative, found him sitting there by his table strown with papers, while in his right hand he held another paper, from which fragments had been torn and scattered on the floor.

It was late at night, and she had listened for his footsteps on the stairs, until, in her anxiety, she ventured to rap upon the door of his room; and when no response was made, she entered.

"Asleep?" she cried doubtingly, but still there was no response, and she knew that her kinsman was sleeping the sleep of death.

At once, she sent for his physician and his lawyer. She knew the family secrets and resolved to guard against possible interference.

"He must have been dead for some time," said the physician, who arrived first. "I have expected he would die suddenly; and knowing his habits, I am not surprised that he died alone. I think we will wait for Mr. Carter before removing him."

In the presence of these witnesses, the lawyer gathered up the papers, with the fragments from the floor, and placed them in a desk which he locked securely; after which proper care was taken of the dead man. Mrs. Bryant was notified of her father-in-law's death, and preparations were made for the funeral.

Was there a will?

This question, so often asked, was not answered until the last obsequies were over.

"Several years since, I drew up a will for Mr. Bryant, which was duly signed and witnessed. At the moment of his death he held a part of this will in his hand. The remainder had been torn into shreds and scattered on the floor. Evidently, his last conscious act was the destruction of this will, and the

estate of our deceased friend will be settled according to the requirements of the law. Having been appointed administrator of this estate, I shall proceed with my duties in that capacity."

This concise statement, made by Mr. Carter, was received with affected indifference, but privately, Mrs. Bryant asked if there was any probability that her husband's sister had left children.

"She had one son," was replied frankly.

"Is he living?" inquired the woman with manifest anxiety.

"I think he is."

"And will he receive his mother's share of her father's property?"

"He certainly will, Mrs. Bryant."

"But Father never acknowledged him as a grandson."

"Not in the way he acknowledged your son, but in a way which leaves no doubt of the boy's identity."

"But we have expected that Father would will the bulk of his property to Morris. He

gave us reason to expect that he would do so."

"Then he must have had a reason for changing his purpose, and so doing tardy justice to another."

"Who is this other who will take half the fortune belonging to us?"

"No one will take a dollar belonging to your family, Mrs. Bryant. Justice will be done, and it will not be best to talk more of this at present."

Morris Bryant was disappointed and angry. Sure that the destroyed will had given him the bulk of his grandfather's property, he felt himself wronged in its destruction.

"I never heard of anything so outrageous," he said to the housekeeper, Mrs. Morey.

"The outrageous part of it was in the boy not having his rights from the beginning," she replied.

"Where has he been all this time?"

"That I can't tell you. I hope he has been in a good place. His mother made a mistake when she married as she did, but

that was no reason why she or her child should be hated. His father was a villain, but the boy was not to blame for that, and I shall be glad to see him have his rights."

"But you won't have anything, and Grandfather ought to have left you a handsome legacy. Very likely he did in that will Mr. Carter says was destroyed."

"Your grandfather paid me my wages, just what I asked, and I have no reason to complain."

"But Grandfather always called me his only grandson. He said I took my father's place with him, and I never shall believe he knew what he was doing when he tore up his will. He was not capable of doing business."

"Capable, or not, he *did* the business, and it cannot be undone. I am thankful for that."

Morris Bryant had never been a favorite with Mrs. Morey, who wondered that his grandfather should lavish upon him such fond indulgence, when every one else could see that he was supremely selfish.

The fact that there was another grandson to share in Mr. Bryant's property was a general surprise to the community, and great was the curiosity in regard to one whose existence had been so long ignored.

Mr. Carter, who knew something of him, made further inquiries, and at the proper time visited the town where he was at school.

A note was dispatched, summoning him to the hotel to meet a gentleman on business. Wondering at the summons, Harold Dorsey met a stranger, who said without ceremony ·

"I am administrator of the estate of your grandfather, lately deceased."

"I never heard that I had a grandfather," replied the young man, his fine face flushing at the abrupt announcement just made.

"Your maternal grandfather was Marcus Bryant. Your mother's marriage displeased him, and he refused to see her afterwards. When she died, your father wrote to your grandfather that he should make no provision for you, and unless your mother's family provided for your support, you would be left

to depend upon charity. Your grandfather took care to prevent this dependence; but he did this in his own way. The last of his life I think he felt that he had treated you unjustly. He destroyed the will which cut you off with a dollar, and left his estate to be divided between your uncle's family and yourself."

Every word had been spoken deliberately, so that the listener could take in its full meaning.

"I think I don't care for the property," said Harold Dorsey. "I presume my grandfather wished me out of existence."

"I presume he did, but you must give him credit for doing you justice at last. He was sorely tried."

"I suppose my father was not a good man."

"He had unfortunate habits; but it will do no good to talk of them. It is useless to condemn those who have gone before us. Don't blame your grandfather too much."

"I have no wish to blame any one, Mr. Carter, but I was shut up to a bare and narrow life, with no one to love me."

"Better that, young man, than a life of indulgence and pampered ease. You were brought up austerely, but you were brought up purely. Mr. Dorsey was a man who would see that you acquired no bad habits."

"Then you knew Mr. Dorsey, and will tell me of him. He must have been used to a different life from that we lived in the woods."

"He was, but he was not strong enough to resist the temptation which ruined him, and his punishment was a life of seclusion with you."

"My grandfather consigned him to that punishment?"

"He did, and so saved the man from a severer punishment."

"Was the man's true name, Dorsey?"

"It was not. That name was assumed to prevent his recognition."

"And my grandfather stipulated that I should be called Harold Dorsey."

"He did; but you will now take your place as your mother's son, and be known as Harry Liscomb."

"I prefer to be known as Harold Dorsey, and, Mr. Carter, I wish you had left me to go on with my own plans. I have kind friends who proved their friendship when I most needed it, and I am able to earn enough for all my wants."

"I should have been false to my trust if I had not sought you out, and put you in possession of the facts I have told you. One-half of your grandfather's property is rightfully yours, and I am sure that, in his last hours, he wished it to be so. His last act restored to you your birthright. When the grave closes over our friends, we should forget and forgive their faults. None of us are perfect."

"No, sir, we are not. We all have much for which to be forgiven, and if my grandfather had seen me, he might have felt differently towards me."

"He would. I can speak for him there. He would have been glad to receive you as one of his family. You have your mother's looks, and judging from what I have heard of you, you have your father's ability."

"Is my father dead?"

"He is. I know that for a certainty."

"What relatives have I?"

"You have four cousins, the children of your mother's brother: a young man and three sisters. Their mother is living, but your uncle has been dead for several years."

"Are any of them Christians?"

"I think not. Your grandfather's family was never considered a religious family. Are you a Christian?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am glad to know it. I make no pretensions to being a Christian myself, but I have a profound respect for any consistent Christian. Hard as it may be, I am sure now that you will forgive your grandfather; and when you come to understand more of what your life might have been with him, possibly you will be thankful that he gave you into Mr. Dorsey's hands."

"I know that God allowed it, and that, in some way, it was for my good."

"That is a sensible conclusion, and since

that part of your life is past, it will be best to think of it as little as possible."

Having said this, Mr. Carter proceeded to inform his companion of the amount of property left by Mr. Bryant. One half of this would be more than Harold Dorsey had ever dreamed of possessing. He had no ambition to be rich; but as he considered how much might be accomplished with large means, he felt that he had cause for thankfulness.

Mr. Carter's time was limited; but the short hour they spent together gave a new impulse to two lives.

The man of the world, with his sharp practice and keen insight, had learned a lesson he could not forget.

"Are you a Christian?"

This question, asked involuntarily, had been answered with so much decision, that he could not doubt it had been answered truthfully. A Christian, and yet so young and strong! Was it not time that he, looking towards the sunset of his life, should consider his relations with God?

"A Christian, and standing head and shoulders above every other member of the Bryant family," he soliloquized. "He has been well trained, and he will know how to make money of real use to himself and to the world. Morris Bryant is not to be compared with him."

"Is it in order for me to inquire if you have seen the claimant to one-half of my grandfather's estate?" asked this same Morris Bryant when opportunity offered.

"It will be in order for me to tell you that I have seen Harry Liscomb, your Aunt Liscomb's son."

"What is he like?"

"Like no one else I have ever seen. In some things he reminded me of his father."

"His father was a wretch."

"The son is a Christian."

"A Christian!" repeated Morris Bryant with a sneer which expressed the contempt he felt for religion.

"Yes, a Christian, and a splendid fellow every way," said Mr. Carter with marked

emphasis. "He deserves to be rich, yet he is able to make his own fortune. I have never seen a stranger who impressed me more favorably. He is a gentleman in his speech and manner, and, if I am not mistaken, he will make his mark in the world."

"Will he come here?"

"He will be likely to come some time, but he has other business on hand than idling away his time."

Harold Dorsey found it difficult to realize that he was a young man of fortune. There would be no more need of early and late work to meet his expenses. No more of close economy, sacrificing one desirable object to obtain another yet more desirable.

The mystery of his life was explained. He did not care to know the temptation to which Mr. Dorsey had yielded, but he wished this man was still living, that he might in some way atone for what he felt to be his grandfather's unkindness.

CHAPTER XXI.

GOOD NEWS.

"I AM glad this fortune did not come to you a day sooner," said Mr. Elliot, when Harold Dorsey told him what had transpired. "I am very glad it did not come to you a day sooner," he added still more emphatically. "I should have liked to see what you would make of yourself without it; but I am heartily glad that justice has at last been done. Your friends will rejoice with you."

"I thought of my friends the moment I knew of my grandfather; but I was coming so soon, I did not write about it."

"And you are Harry Liscomb. It will be strange to call you by a new name."

"You are not to call me by that name, Mr. Elliot. I prefer the old name, and shall petition for the right to retain it."

"Have you thought seriously of this?"

"Yes, sir, and I have decided what I choose to do."

"Do Mr. and Mrs. Peavey know of your fortune?"

"No, sir; I have not told them. I wished to tell you first."

"Thank you for the preference. I had no claim to it, but I appreciate the feeling which prompted it; and, Harold, as I was your friend in adversity, I will be your friend in prosperity."

"I shall always be grateful for your friendship, Mr. Elliot. I cannot feel half so rich, with my fortune, as I did when I was sure of work, where I could see you every day, and Mrs. Peavey told me I could occupy her little garret chamber as long as I pleased. Then I was rich indeed. It was more for me than millions would be now."

"The old people will be afraid of losing you."

"They will find their fears groundless. I would not desert them any sooner than I would desert a good father and mother.

I shall help with the farm work as I always have. I shall raise the roof of my garret, to give myself more breathing space; but, so long as I live, I wish to feel that I have a right to that room. In that room I have made some of the most important decisions of my life."

"I knew you would come before long, because you always do come when you say you will, no matter how many other folks want to see you."

"I always intend to keep my promises," said Harold, in response to this expression of confidence by Mrs. Peavey, as he sat down by her in her neat kitchen, a few minutes after bidding Mr. Elliot good evening. "I have some news to tell you that I hope you will be glad to hear."

"Then it must be good news, for you wouldn't hope we'd be glad to hear bad news. Tell us what it is."

Harold told them with few words and few comments.

"It aint much different from what I ex-

pected," responded Mr. Peavey, looking at him earnestly. "It aint much different, and I am glad you are rich, because you will do good with your money. It will take us a good while to get used to your not being the same you have been, but for all that, we can be glad."

"I am glad and sorry too," added the dear old wife, with tears in her eyes, before Harold could assure them that he was the very same he had been. "I am glad for you, and sorry for us. Now you are rich, it ain't likely we shall see much more of you."

"Are you going to send me away from you; away from the only home I have?' asked the young man. "I wish to think of *your* home as *my* home, the same as if I really belonged to you. I would like to make some improvements in the house, if you are willing, but if not, I shall be glad to call it home, just as it is."

This reassured his friends, and before they parted for the night calculations had been made for the desired improvements. The

next morning, however, when Harold appeared in his working-dress, the conversation of the previous evening seemed like a dream to Mr. and Mrs. Peavey. Could it be that he who drove the cows a-field, whistling merrily, was really worth more thousands of dollars than they could count acres belonging to their farm?

Strange, and yet true, as everybody in Austenville soon knew. Congratulations were showered upon him, although many watched him narrowly to see if, with his change of fortune, there was a corresponding change in his appearance. But with all their scrutiny, they saw nothing to condemn, as he called upon one and another, even more genial and companionable than ever before.

Miss Greenleaf was not there. Another had taken her place, while she had fitted herself for a higher and more lucrative position, which she filled with rare acceptance. The years spent in Austenville had counted to her for more than twice a twelvemonth, so much had she learned of her own powers, and the

possible treasures of knowledge she might make her own.

Esther Wetherell had spent a part of two years in school, but she was now at home; and hardly had she accustomed herself to thinking of Harold Dorsey as rich, when her cousin saw him coming towards the house.

"There's Harold Dorsey, looking just as he used to," said Miss Sperry, calling to Esther. "I shouldn't mistrust there had been any great change in him, only what you might expect in a young man that is learning all the time, and finding out what he is good for. We aint much used to rich folks, but I guess he can come right in."

As the door was ajar, he came in without ceremony, and was presently listening to a report of the elder woman's success in farming.

"I have prospered. I haven't made any great amount of money; but I have gained right along, and I am in a fair way to gain more. I have some good stock, and I shall raise enough to live on. We make ourselves

comfortable, and when Esther is here with me, I wouldn't change places with the richest woman in the country; not even with Miss Austen. I know she aint the richest, but she is rich enough, and she is going to be richer. She will make a fortune in the mill, and she deserves it too. The good she has done here in town is more than anybody can tell. Some of it folks can see, but a good deal of the best part of it is out of sight. She has just about made me over, and there is Esther too. But she can speak for herself. I guess I have done my share of talking for the present."

"How happy she is in her work," remarked Harold, when this farmer had left the room.

"She is very happy," replied Esther. "She was always good and kind, but her life was very narrow until she became acquainted with Miss Austen. Most people would think her life narrow now, working as she does for small profits, and counting her gains so slowly, but she is satisfied."

"There is other work for you."

"I think there is, but I am always glad to come back to Cousin Jane and help her in her homely labors. It does me good, and it seems to me it will always be a pleasure to come here, even should I live to be as rich as people say you are."

"I believe you would, Esther. Riches give their possessors larger opportunities, but they do not change the hearts."

"They sometimes seem to, Harold."

"Such hearts are poor affairs, at best, and their owners not worth consideration. Miss Austen and Mr. Stuart would never change, except to grow better. They deserve to be rich, they will do so much good with their money."

"By the same token, *you* deserve to be rich, but the best gifts are those which cannot be valued in dollars and cents. People can earn money for themselves, but sympathy is not to be bought."

"That is true, and the sympathy I receive from my friends is worth more to me than my fortune."

"I can understand that; for sympathy and friendship have made me rich without a fortune."

"I can understand that, too, Esther, and now you have only to make your opportunities and improve them. They will be sure to come at your will."

"I know that by experience. I intend to take what is called a thorough course of study, but I am not ready to commence, except as I am gaining little by little from term to term. I am glad you could keep on steadily from the first, as I suppose Robert Bumstead will."

"He will keep on to the end, if there is any end for him. He is very studious, and doing very well."

"We should expect that, of course, and his grandparents are very proud of him. But I think they have hardly recovered from their astonishment at his wishing to go to school with you, so young as he was. Mr. Bumstead says he never dreamed of having a scholar in his family."

This conversation was continued until interrupted by a summons to tea, which Miss Sperry had prepared; and as full justice was done to her snowy biscuits, with honey from her hives under the old apple-tree, the hostess envied no woman grander possessions. She could entertain her friends generously; meet the demands made upon her as a member of society, and contribute her share to help others poorer than herself. Beyond this she had no ambitions, although for her young cousin her hopes and expectations were boundless.

Harold Dorsey would gladly have given this cousin substantial assistance, but he feared to put their friendship thus to the test, and so was content to wish her success, while assuring her of his constant sympathy.

"I judge her by myself," he said to Miss Austen, when speaking of Esther Wetherell.

"Then you think she is as independent as you are," was responded.

"Yes, ma'am, quite as independent, and much prouder. I appreciated Mr. Stuart's

kindness, without being troubled by it; but if I should offer money to Esther, even as a loan, I think she would never be quite so glad to see me again."

"Perhaps not. I have thought much the same, when considering how I could give her acceptable help. She is able to provide for herself, now that she can earn money."

"Good sense, good health, and an opportunity to earn money is all one needs for a start in life; and I confess that I was a little disappointed when I found myself entitled to a fortune I had not earned. Mr. Elliot told me he was glad it did not come to me sooner, and I am glad too. I needed just the discipline I had with Mr. Dorsey, and the experience I have had here in Austenville. I wish to thank you now, Miss Austen, for all your kindness. I can never make you any adequate return, but I appreciate what you have done for me."

"I have only done my pleasure, and it is more blessed to give than to receive."

"Then you must be blessed indeed."

"More blessed than you know, Harold," said Mr. Stuart, coming in that moment. "Aunt Margaret has always been giving of her best, and yet she has grown richer every day."

"So that no one is indebted to me," rejoined Miss Austen.

Others thought differently, but she had neither time nor inclination to calculate what gratitude was her due. Her relatives and friends would never outgrow her love or her influence, although some around her were fast outgrowing their positions in the little village of which she was the presiding genius.

People talked of Mr. Elliot as the smartest man in town; worthy of public confidence, and fitted to represent the community in the legislature of the State. He was popular with all classes, as he could not fail to know, and yet he worked early and late, giving no sign that he desired a wider sphere of action.

"He'll not be doing that long," said Mrs. Rady, as she watched him from the mill win-

dow. "There's something else for him, and this is the place to find something else. If I was younger, may be I'd be different."

"Then you think about it, don't you, mother?" responded Mrs. Borine.

"I think many things, but there's my loom needing me," and with deft fingers she supplied some threads which had dropped from the web she was weaving.

If younger, she might be different. Old as she thought herself, she *was* different from what she had been. The blind faith in priest and confessional had given place to questionings if cross and crucifix were more than emblems of a religion having its home in the heart, and exemplified in the life. A chapter from the Bible was read aloud in her home every morning, and deeper than she knew were the impressions this reading had produced.

"O granny, if you would only go to the Sunday meetings!" exclaimed Norah, while she and her mother waited to hear the stroke of the bell.

"Never mind me, honey," was replied. "I'll bide at home; and when you come you'll sing to me. Then I'll have my meeting. But mind you, both, if I'm sick and like to die, call the mistress."

"I never thought, before, that granny *could* die," remarked the child as they walked on. "I must be careful not to trouble her. She does so much for me, I have the same as two mothers."

"Bless her dear heart," thought Mrs. Rady when left alone. "She's that kind and tender, it pays for all my work; and, please God, she shall have a chance with the best. Harold 's at home, and the meeting sure to be what they'll like. Well, now, it's strange;" and the woman leaned forward, resting her head upon her hands. "It's strange, the way with things here. Would they been the same, was master a priest, and mistress a nun? Would I have my darling in the old church?"

She caught her breath quickly, as this last question was uttered almost aloud, crossing herself in token of acknowledgment of sin.

Then, rising, she went out to examine her garden, thus resolutely putting away all thoughts of religion; and it was not until Norah called to her that she again entered the house.

"O granny, it was best of all," said the child. "Nobody ever talked so well before as Harold Dorsey did to-night. I wish I could be as glad and happy as he is; and it isn't because he has so much money either. He never said a word about that."

"What did he talk about?" asked Mrs. Rady.

"About true riches; the riches there is in the love of Christ Jesus; because we can have that love everywhere and all the time. You know Christ Jesus is the Saviour, granny."

"Yes, child, I'd be a heathen, not to know that."

"He has all power in His hands, and can give us everything that is best for us to have. Harold said that when God takes one thing away from us, He gives us something else in

place of what He takes away. I kept thinking, all the time, how thankful I was He gave me such a dear, good grandmother. Jessie says I ought to call you grandmother, but I told her you liked granny better."

"So I do, Norah, dear. It has the old home sound, and I'm hoping you'll not change my name with everything else."

"I never will change it, granny, no matter what comes."

CHAPTER XXII.

MANY CHANGES.

"HAROLD DORSEY has his rights at last!"

Jaques Beloy heard the glad news and made the forest echo with his shouts. No particulars were known; but the simple fact was sufficient to arouse the enthusiasm of all who had known him in his old home. When he should come among them again, he would come as a rich man, perhaps almost as a stranger; yet they would still rejoice in his good fortune.

"Don't tell me that," exclaimed the chopper, when some one ventured to suggest the possibility of the young man's indifference to such plain people. "I know Harold Dorsey too well to believe it of him. He'll come as a friend, and preach to us God's truth, while he lives up to it every day of his life. He's too grand to be set up with money, even if he

could buy the whole town. No, sir. When he comes, you'll see that he haint gone back on himself."

"I hope so," was replied doubtingly.

"I know so. Trust me for that," said Jaques, marching away with firm step, and whistling cheerily.

Never a doubt had he, and when surprised by his landlord, the hearty greeting he received confirmed his loyal trust.

"I told them all you'd be as good as ever, and I don't care if you've got millions, you'll be the same to me."

"I should be sorry to seem otherwise," responded Harold to this assurance.

"I should be the sorriest; but you're all right, just as I knew you'd be. Now I want you to come 'round to supper with us. I've got more to show you that I've done last year, and my wife begins to want another room, now the children are growing larger, and we can live more like folks."

"She needs another room, and she shall have it," said the owner of the house, with a

smile at his companion's earnestness. "I will take supper with you to-morrow, and then we will decide about it. Mrs. Andrews will expect me to supper to-day."

"Is Ben at home?"

"No, he is not."

"I wish he was. I want you to see him; though may be, if you do, he won't tell you; but he needs some help. He has done the best he could, but he's getting tired out, and there's a long road before him yet. If you've got money, the Lord meant you should divide with them that aint likely to get much any other way."

"I understand you, Mr. Beloy, and I thank you for the suggestion."

"You are welcome, Mr. Dorsey. I don't know as you needed to have me say anything, but the last time I saw Ben, he looked so pale and tired, that if it hadn't been for my family, I should offered him a month's earnings on the spot. But you see, Harold, I have my children to think of, and they'll be wanting to know as much as the rest. I'm learning, too,

myself, the same lessons my oldest girl learns in school. My wife and I never had much chance to learn books, and it aint likely we should ever cared, if we hadn't begun to study the Bible. That set us to thinking, and so we study other things. Nina says we learn fast, but there are some things we don't any of us understand, that perhaps you'll explain to us."

"Certainly I will, and I am glad to know you are studying. You could not do a wiser thing."

"We've been to singing-school, besides, with the oldest children, and every one of them, down to the baby, can sing our hymns. We've been over to the meeting two or three Sundays, and ever since Nina heard the organ there, she says she shall learn to play one some time. She is brim-full of music. I hope you are going to stay over two Sundays with us."

"I intend to be here two Sundays."

"Good for you. We must let everybody know you are here, so there'll be a good turn-

out. We always do the best we can for ourselves, and sometimes we get some help from visitors, but you'll count for more than all the rest."

When Sunday morning dawned, many who cared little for a religious meeting were attracted from their homes by a desire to see Harold Dorsey; so crowding the little school house that it became necessary to conduct the services in an adjoining grove where was ample space. In these Harold bore a conspicuous part, earnest and impressive; and at their close, nearly the entire congregation gathered around him, eager to congratulate and thank him.

"'Twas hard for you, living with Mr. Dorsey, shut up, as you used to be; but we can't any of us be sorry you was sent here," said an old man. "I studied over it a good deal, but I never got no clew to it, till after Ben Andrews started up these meetings, and told us what first set him to reading the Bible. Then, when I see how things came 'round, and I remembered what I'd 'most forgot; that

the Lord always carries out His own plans, I knew you hadn't got through with us. That's been proved all along, and proved again to-day. I've lived as I hadn't ought to, but if my prayers can count for anything, may God bless you."

Ben Andrews walked five miles that day, that he might be present at the meetings, and in the evening, he and Harold Dorsey talked for hours; until he was constrained to accept the proffered loan to meet his college expenses.

Harold had not yet attained his majority, but he had sufficient means at his command to do what he wished. During the week he made arrangements for adding a room to his cottage, and went every day to admire the rustic elegance which had so increased its value. He gratified his tenants by eating with them on several occasions, noting, as he did so, the growing refinement apparent in the manners of those who sat at table with him.

He would have enjoyed spending his entire vacation there, but others, elsewhere, had

strong claims upon him. There was work to be done on Mr. Peavey's farm, and improvements to be made in the house. Some pleasure excursions, too, had been planned with Dick Fielding, in which Clarke and Mason Stuart would join.

It was under new conditions that he met most of the young people visiting at the great house; but as Mason told him, with characteristic frankness, he was no better for being richer, and he must expect to be treated just the same as he always had been.

Desiring nothing more, he took his old place among them; a general favorite, sure of a welcome whenever he appeared. Jessie and Norah were shy of him at first, but gradually this shyness disappeared, and he was so far taken into favor that they confided to him their plans for "going away to school." They were going together, and they hoped to be with Esther Wetherell and Miss Greenleaf.

"Won't we be the happiest girls if it all comes about as we expect! And won't it be the nicest of anything that could possibly hap-

pen to us!' exclaimed Norah. "Then we shall be coming home for vacations, the same as you do; but I don't suppose we shall ever know as much as you will. Perhaps we shall not know as much as Robert, but we shall know all we can."

"I have no doubt you will be splendid scholars, but what of those you leave at home?"

"Mother and granny say they are willing to do without me."

"And my father says he is willing to do without me, because he knows I ought to learn more than I can learn here."

"Almost everybody is trying to learn. Miss Sperry says she should go to school, herself, if she wasn't so old. Have you been to see her this vacation?"

"Yes, I have."

"Then you know how much nicer her house is than it used to be; and Miss Austen says she is a very superior woman."

"Yes, only she didn't have any chance when she was young," added Jessie. "You

didn't, either, Harold, but father says you are one of a thousand, and I think you must be."

To the friends who regarded Harold Dorsey with such affectionate admiration, the indifference of his relatives was incomprehensible. Mrs. Bryant was wise enough to know that he might prove a desirable acquaintance; but she continued to regard him as an enemy, even after he had relinquished all claim to the family mansion, upon terms she acknowledged to be most generous.

Morris professed to believe him an impostor, recklessly denouncing Mr. Carter as base and false; but none of these things moved either the lawyer or his client. Devoting himself entirely to study, the latter made such rapid progress, that he was fitted for college a year in advance of the class of which he had been a member when he entered school.

Then onward and upward, his way lay plain before him. His wealth, his high standing as a scholar, and his fine personal

appearance gave him at once an enviable position. Back of all these, too, was a sturdy independence, with an unflinching regard for truth, which made his religion conspicuous for its consistency.

He was a friend to those most needing friendship; and many a poor student blessed an unknown benefactor for timely assistance. Simple in his manners and habits, he was an example for others who sometimes found it hard to resist the temptations to extravagance.

"Harold Dorsey is the grandest fellow in college," wrote Dick Fielding to Miss Austen. "I wish you could see how like a king he moves among us all, without manifesting either pride or vanity. He is above that."

Harold, in his turn, was lavish in praise of this friend, from whom so much was expected; and by their mutual representations Mason Stuart was induced to revoke his decision against four years of study within college walls. He would go with Rufus Brown and Robert Bumstead, and he would do so well that Aunt Margaret should have

no occasion to feel that money was wasted upon him.

Margaret Austen could well afford to educate two boys. In devising liberal things for others, she had ensured her own prosperity. A large brick mill had been erected by the old stone mill, while new, commodious houses made pleasant homes for the men and women to whom this gave employment. There was a demand for their goods, keeping pace with the supply, and every bale of these goods was sold under the direct supervision of Clarke Stuart, so that the entire profits of the business were retained in the family.

Years have passed since then, bringing changes to those whose fortunes have been so strangely mingled, yet Austenville is still in the full tide of prosperity. Dwellings have been enlarged and remodelled, but they are the same to those who occupy them.

Mr. Elliot's cottage has been improved from time to time, until no one would recognize its identity. He, too, has improved, discharging faithfully and well the public duties

devolving upon him. He does not forget the time when he thought himself rich with the humblest shelter for his child; and now, with money and honors, he thanks God for undeserved mercies.

The friendship between Jessie and Norah Borine has stood the test of time, which has only drawn them more closely together. Mrs. Rady has lived to see her granddaughter admired for beauty and accomplishments such as few possess, while at home there could be no more dutiful or loving child.

Edward Stuart's wife is mistress of the great house; a worthy mistress too, who so far as may be, emulates the virtues of her predecessor. Miss Austen spends some part of each year there, but the house in which she was born grows dearer to her as the years go by, and she can trust her nephews to care for her interests as well as their own. Other nephews and nieces have been added to the number who as children called her "Margie," and to them all has she given loving welcome. Harold Dorsey and Dick Fielding,

as his family still call him, spent a year in Europe, and returned to establish themselves, each in his chosen profession: the one as a lawyer, the other as a physician. Dr. Fielding has the reputation of a skilful practitioner, and is winning his way to popular favor.

His friend Harold may have a more brilliant career, but it will hardly be more useful, although large opportunities open before them both. The old people who welcomed the stranger lad to their home have grown more and more dependent upon him, yet in the midst of fast increasing cares and responsibilities, they are never neglected, never forgotten.

No more does the lad forget the old forest home, which he visits yearly, and near which he has builded a beautiful chapel, where the people may gather from sabbath to sabbath, and where he himself worships with a depth of emotion he feels nowhere else. On his last visit he was accompanied by one whom we have known as Jessie Elliot, but whom

he introduced to his friends as "Mrs. Dorsey."

"A proper match," Miss Sperry said. "There never was a better one, and I tell you what, Esther, she is as well off as if she could paint pictures and sing like Norah Borine. I'm thinking, too, that Norah will be married before many years. Mason Stuart don't calculate to give up when he has once set his heart on anything, and his heart is set on having Norah for a wife. If it aint, there can't anybody read by signs. You couldn't tell so well about Harold, because the signs didn't show. But there, we have moved along with the rest; and, please God, we will keep on to the end, you in your way and I in mine. When Miss Greenleaf came here, she didn't know on what road she had started, any more than Harold Dorsey knew where he was going, when he stopped at Mr. Peavey's. People talk about his fortune coming to him when his grandfather died, but I tell you it came to him a good while before that."

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